# Wandering Saints: Chan Eccentrics in the Art and Culture of Song and Yuan China

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*On the cover*: Hanshan reading a scroll by Luochuang.
University Art Museum of the University of California (after Weidner 1994: cat. no. 72).

# Wandering Saints: Chan Eccentrics in the Art and Culture of Song and Yuan China

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## Table of Contents

## Abbreviations

T.: Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds., 1924-1934: *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (*Revised Buddhist Canon of the Taishō era*). Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai.

References are specified by 'T.' followed by the text number, volume, page and register.

ZZK: Nakano Tatsue 中野達慧, ed., 1905-1912: *Dainihon Zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經 (*Supplement to the Buddhist canon*). Kyoto: Zōkyō Shoin.

References are specified by 'ZZK'followed by the series, case number, volume, page and register.

# Preface

> To ascend this cold mountain path
> is to climb an incessant road
> along the endless valley, boulder-strewn,
> and across the wide river
> fringed with heavy reeds;
> the moss, without the moisture
> of the rain, is treacherous
> and pines, without the urging
> of the wind, sing out:
> "Whoever dares to put the world aside!
> come sit with us,
> amid white cloud!"[1]

This is one of the first poems in the collected writings of Hanshan 寒山, poet, recluse, alchemist, immortal and Chan eccentric monk, who allegedly lived in the Tiantai mountains in southeast China in the seventh or eighth centuries. This legendary saint has been to countless admirers and devotees a symbol of freedom and enlightenment. As recently as in the 1950s, Hanshan inspired the writers and poets of the Beat Generation in the United States.

Indeed, few personalities compare to Hanshan and his fellow wandering saints, popularly known as the Chan eccentrics. Dressed in rags, these exceptional monks supposedly dwelled in uninhabited mountain regions as well as bustling cities and markets, where they spoke and behaved in extraordinary ways. While they did not belong to any particular tradition and propounded truths outside the norms of society, the eccentrics represented qualities that were valued by various social and religious groups, most prominently the Chan establishment. In the Song and Yuan dynasties (960-1368), the monks appear throughout Chan texts, and they become a popular and recurring theme in art.

Remarkably, traditional and modern scholarship have rarely considered the theme of the Chan eccentric in Chinese art and culture, and most research has been limited to discussions of select paintings of the monks in catalogues of museum exhibitions. Yet, this important theme and its translation into texts and art holds clues to issues current in the fields of Chinese Studies, Art History and Chan Studies. It questions long-held notions of religion and art in China, including definitions of "religious belief", "portraiture" and "Chan art".

[1] Hobson 2003: 16.

This study investigates the Chan eccentric across different types of text and artistic media. It recognizes the importance of the monks and their artistic representations for the Chan establishment, while also paying specific attention to situations where borders between religious traditions and artistic media are blurred. Such an approach allows for investigation of sources that are still largely neglected in the study of Chinese religion and art, including monastic codes and monastic gazetteers, and artistic media that are not generally associated with particular traditions, such as sculptures and steles in connection with Chan. I am indebted to previous scholarship for translations of Chan primary sources and traditional art-historical texts.

Chapter One provides some central historical background on the Chan establishment in the Song dynasty, and considers controversial opinions in earlier scholarship with regard to the religious characteristics of Song Chan. It also introduces the Chan eccentrics and examines their position in connection with other groups of recluses in traditional China.

In Chapter Two, I argue that portraits of Chan eccentrics are a unique category in the visual art of Song and Yuan China. This chapter defines the corpus of Chan eccentric portraits and distinguishes groupings within that corpus, comparing images of Chan eccentrics with other, contemporaneous types of painting and portraiture. It also investigates conceptualizations of portraiture in both Chinese and Western art histories, and argues that usage in Western, Chinese and Chan traditions validates its use for paintings of the eccentrics.

Chapter Three explores the creation of portraits of Chan eccentric monks. It shows that the artists of the portraits hail from various backgrounds, and acknowledges their individual contributions to the theme. It also examines inscriptions by Chan abbots on the surfaces of the portraits. The nature of these inscriptions is unique to this type of art and serves to illustrate the connection between the concepts of “Chan” and “art”.

Chapter Four studies images of the Chan eccentrics in sculptures and on steles, media which have been neglected in Chan studies. It also considers references to the monks in poems, plays and Daoist literature. This evidence shows that the eccentrics were part of wider, popular beliefs in which they could be Bodhisattvas, poets, immortals, alchemists and saints, in addition to Chan personalities.

Finally, Chapter Five returns to the issue of the relationship between Chan and art, based on how objects were used in monasteries. It shows how monastic codes and monastic gazetteers testify to the centrality of the eccentric for the Chan establishment: as part of daily life in Chan monasteries, and as part of the art and architecture of major Chan temples. Chapter Five also considers evidence of images of the eccentrics in private collections in China, and in monastic and secular collections in Japan. It traces the visuality of the eccentrics in progressively wider circles of viewing and exchange, and shows how rituals of viewing and collecting in China and Japan shape how we historicize this visuality today.

# Chapter One
# The Chan Establishment and the Chan Eccentrics in the Song Dynasty

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### BUDDHISM IN CHINA

The arrival of Buddhism in China is described in several legends found in early Chinese historical sources. One of the most famous accounts is contained in the *Wei Shu* 魏書, a history of the Wei dynasty (386-556), compiled by Wei Shou 魏收 (506-572). This story tells of the envoy Zhang Qian 張騫, who traveled to "the western regions" in 138 BCE. Among the reports he presented on his return to China, one that most fascinated his contemporaries--and later historians--concerned Buddhism in India: he is credited with introducing the Indian faith to the Chinese elite. In another well-known legend, Zhang Qian's mission is connected to a dream of Emperor Ming 明帝 (r. 58-75) of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE). This emperor once dreamt of a golden deity flying over his palace. He discovered that he had dreamt of the Buddha, and decided to send a messenger to learn more about the sage and his teachings. Zhang Qian supposedly led his mission to the west on the orders of Emperor Ming, and returned with the *Sūtra in Forty-Two Sections* (*Sishi'er zhang jing* 四十二章經), the first Buddhist text to be translated into Chinese. Whether Zhang Qian really acted on direct orders of his rulers is impossible to ascertain, but such a royal diplomatic construction would certainly have satisfied a readership of intensified Buddhist adherence, some five centuries later.

While finding legends fascinating, scholars of Chinese Buddhism have also long recognized the sometimes anachronistic and generally apocryphal nature of such accounts. Instead, they prefer to accept that an edict of 65 CE mentioning the Buddhist activities of a certain Liu Ying 劉英 is the earliest evidence of Buddhist presence in China.[2] Having started as a faith practiced by scattered communities of foreign immigrants, by the second century CE Buddhism was popular among both foreigners and Chinese in thriving monasteries in the Eastern Han capital of Luoyang.

[2] Zürcher 1972: 27.

Teachers from China's western regions recited Buddhist texts which were subsequently translated by Chinese monks and laymen.

Apart from dates, an equally interesting way to historicize the early development of Buddhism in China is to focus on the complications arising from the encounter between two civilizations. Apart from problems of translation and transcription, there were many ideological differences: the adaptation of Buddhism in China involved a transformation of both Chinese culture and Buddhism itself. In the long process of this transformation, the Chinese Buddhists capitalized on similarities rather than differences between the two cultures. Robert Sharf and Wendi Adamek contend that rather than regarding Buddhism as "conquering" China, in the words of Erik Zürcher, we should understand that "Chinese patterns of thought and Chinese concerns dictated the terms of what appeared to be a joint venture and they remained in secure possession of the cultural terrain".[3]

Indeed, numerous examples from early Chinese art reveal, most visibly, the gradual incorporation of Buddhism in a Chinese system of beliefs. Images of the Buddha and Buddhist scenes decorate tombs, funerary jars and auspicious objects such as so-called money-trees and mirrors in the Eastern Han (25-220), the Wu kingdom (222-280) and the Western Jin dynasty (265-316). The Buddhist elements on these objects replace indigenous deities such as the Queen Mother of the West (*Xiwangmu* 西王母), or co-exist harmoniously with them. The Buddha seems to have been regarded as an auspicious sign (*xiangrui* 祥瑞), rather than as a representative of a totally different faith.[4]

Concepts central to early Indian Buddhism such as renunciation, or the detachment from worldly life, contrasted sharply with the Chinese sense of social responsibility found in ancestor worship and the practice of filial piety. While monastic life, a form of seclusion from society, remained an important element of Chinese Buddhism, Mahāyāna or 'Greater Vehicle' Buddhism, with its emphasis on liberation within the world of suffering, became the preferred form of religious guidance. On a practical level, this form of Buddhism offered a host of beneficial deities who could be worshipped on a daily basis. Holy sites for these deities could sometimes be found within China itself, catering to the needs of believers. Between the fifth and the seventh centuries, using the Mahāyāna doctrine, Chinese Buddhists

[3] Sharf 1991 in Adamek 2003: 59.
[4] On Buddhist elements in early Chinese art, see Wu Hung 1986.

developed unique versions of religious practice. By the Tang dynasty (618-906), four major traditions had evolved: Pure Land (*jingtu* 淨土), Tiantai 天台, Huayan 華嚴, and Chan 禪.

Pure Land referred to the illustrious realm of the Buddha Amitābha, where Pure Land devotees hoped to be reborn. The Tiantai tradition was named after Mount Tiantai, the residence of its acclaimed founder Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597). Huayan was named after the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (*Avatamsaka Sūtra / Huayanjing* 華嚴經), the Buddhist text that practitioners of this tradition held high. Finally, Chan, derived from the Sanskrit *dhyāna* or meditation, was a descriptive name for a tradition that privileged meditative practices.

Studies on the history of religion in China tend to present the four traditions of the Tang as four independent schools. Sharf points out that this assumption is problematic, in his discussion of the Pure Land tradition.[5] Most strikingly, the teachers associated with transmitting the Pure Land teachings never recorded a lineage to establish an independent school. Lay societies that focused their devotions on the Pure Land were usually affiliated with monasteries of other movements, mainly Tiantai.

In contrast to the Pure Land tradition, the other three traditions had constructed the beginnings of a lineage by the Tang dynasty. However, regarding them as fully independent schools, particularly during their formative stages, would not reveal the complete picture. More useful for a better understanding of Tiantai, Huayan and Chan and the ways in which they were related is Zürcher's metaphor of the two major Chinese practices of Buddhism and Daoism as two different pyramids merging in a shared base of mutual influence.[6] This base represents popular practices and beliefs, in other words a large space where Buddhism and Daoism are not seen as separate. Rising vertically up to the level of the elite, the two traditions see themselves as different from each other.

Similarly, at the uppermost level of doctrinal concerns, early Tiantai, Huayan and Chan can be differentiated. Zhiyi, generally regarded as the founder of Tiantai, divided Buddhist texts according to a chronological and methodological scheme. Teachings found in different texts were assumed to apply to people with different

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[5] Sharf 2002.
[6] Zürcher 1980.

levels of understanding. The scheme culminated in the *Lotus Sūtra (Saddharmapundarīka Sūtra / Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經), seen as suitable for the highest level of understanding. Similarly, Fazang 法藏 (643-712), the founder of Huayan, privileged the *Flower Garland Sūtra*. Fazang described the universe as a static principle (*li*) expressed through dynamic phenomena (*shi*). The highest aim for a practitioner of Huayan was to realize that these two elements were in perfect harmony. Chan in turn is associated with the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* (*Lengjiajing* 楞伽經) and the *Diamond Sūtra* (*Jingangjing* 金剛經). Chan allowed its students an intuitive approach to enlightenment. On the level of their practical functioning, however, factions within the three traditions often did not consider themselves part of a bigger school. They simply borrowed from each other or even compete outright. Most importantly, on the level of daily activities, doctrinal differences cannot be used to extrapolate Tiantai, Huayan or Chan practices. In addition, the practical experience of the Buddhist religion was very similar in temples and monasteries associated with the different schools.

Of the four Buddhist traditions of the Tang, the best known to this day is Chan. In the early twentieth century, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki introduced Chan Buddhism to the West, in its Japanese form of Zen.[7] While the field of Chan studies has tremendously developed, Suzuki's writings continue to influence contemporary popular views of Chan. Often, Chan is associated with a mysticism that transcends any religious or historical framework. Through the work of Kenneth Ch'en, one of the early scholars of Chinese Buddhism writing for a Western readership, Chan is also known as a form of Buddhism that rejects texts and images, giving preference to straightforward dialogue and contemplative meditation instead.[8] In line with views of Song-dynasty (960-1279) Chan exponents, Ch'en argues that this exceptional character of Chan was most prominent during its "Golden Age", from the late-eighth to the mid-tenth century. The Song dynasty, he argues, marks the beginning of the decline of Buddhism in general and of this sect of Buddhism in particular. In the Song, Chan's earlier originality and spontaneity are lost and its monasteries are only concerned with status and self-enrichment, through engagements with the state and lay patrons.

[7] See for instance Suzuki 1964.
[8] Ch'en 1964.

Reacting to Suzuki's approach of Chan as a mystic tradition, Hu Shi and Yanagida Seizan present a historicist analysis of Chan.[9] The historicist view regards Chan simply as one among many religious movements. Yanagida in particular attempts to reconstruct its early development. In what may be regarded as a follow-up to Yanagida's work, recent scholarship by Theodore Griffith Foulk provides a critical review of the discourse through the ages on Song Chan Buddhism.[10] Foulk points out that Chan Buddhism as we know it today is to a large extent a Song fabrication, a novel phenomenon at the time that equally needs to be explored. He shows how Song-dynasty Chan believers created a unified Chan establishment. The Song Chan establishment was fundamental for the development of distinct forms of Buddhist art and portraiture. The following pages present an introduction to the history of the Chan institution, informed by Yanagida's and Foulk's work.

## EARLY CHAN

The term *chan* is first mentioned in the famous *Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳) written by Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554) in 531. His use of the term refers merely to a form of religious practice, usually meditation in a sitting posture. In the continuation of the *Biographies*, the *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Xu Gaosengzhuan* 續高僧傳) written in 645 by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667), *chan* and *chanshi* 禪師 or 'meditation master' similarly refer to the practice and practitioners of meditation, without any connections to a particular lineage that could be seen to constitute a religious institution.

The biography of Bodhidharma (Damo 達磨), the illustrious founder of Chan Buddhism, is also part of the *Continued Biographies*. Believed to be a monk of Indian or Persian origin, Bodhidharma traveled to the Chinese kingdoms of Song and Wei in the early sixth century. He spent many years in solitary meditation before transmitting his knowledge to his student Huike 慧可. Bodhidharma, like most founders of religious schools, has, in the words of Bernard Faure, only a "dim historical existence".[11] Only two texts can be associated with him. First, the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, which according to Huike containes the essence of Bodhidharma's teachings. Second,

[9] McRae 1993-1994.
[10] Foulk 1992 ,1993 and 1999.
[11] Faure 1986: 197.

the *Treatise on the Two Entrances and Four Practices* (*Er ru si xing lun* 二入四行論), the only non-apocryphal work attributed to Bodhidharma and recorded by his disciple Tanlin 曇林. Whatever his standing as a historical figure, Bodhidharma's later position as the founding figure of Chan in China was never the subject of any doubt. His religious significance became immense.

According to Yanagida, the first reference to an actual Chan lineage stemming from Bodhidharma dates from the late seventh century. An epitaph places the monk Faru 法如 (638-689) at the end of a line of a transmission of special teachings. This line of transmission supposedly led from the Buddha and Indian Buddhist masters to Bodhidharma, who then instructed the first of a line of Chan masters as far as Faru. The epitaph claimed that:

> these men cannot be divided into groups that are named, and it is clear that they had a separate lineage. And it was the Tripitaka Dharma teacher of South India, Bodhidharma, who inherited and continued this lineage. His inspired transformation being mysterious and profound, [Bodhidharma] entered the Wei [regime of north China] and transmitted the teachings to Huike. Huike transmitted them to Sengcan, Sengcan transmitted them to Daoxin, Daoxin transmitted them to Hongren and Hongren transmitted them to Faru.[12]

Faru's original epitaph is now lost, but the idea it proposed was picked up by two texts: the *Record of the Transmission of the Dharma Treasure* (*Chuan fabao ji* 傳法寶紀) and the *Records of the Masters and Disciples of the Lankāvatāra* (*Lengjia shizi ji* 楞伽師資記). These texts amplify the Chan line of transmission with the figure of Shenxiu 神秀, a second successor to Hongren 弘忍, in addition to Faru. The texts identify the monks as patriarchs: men who had received a teaching outside the Buddhist texts. In a description of Shenxiu, the *Records of the Masters and Disciples of the Lankāvatāra* notes the nature of the teaching and its transmission:

> He received the Dharma (law) of Chan, and just as one candle is lit from another he received it all in silence. Inexpressible in words, it transcends all the functionings of mind and consciousness.[13]

While defining the true teachings of the Buddha as teachings found outside the Buddhist texts, both *Records* recognize the influence of the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, the

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[12] Jorgensen 1987: 101.
[13] McRae 1993-1994: 61.

text supposed to contain the essence of Bodhidharma's transmission to Huike. According to the *Records*, the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* was not only transmitted to Huike, but to all the other Chan patriarchs as well. Another important connection made by the *Records* is that between Bodhidharma and the Shaolin temple on Mount Song. Located near Luoyang in Henan province, the Shaolin temple on Mount Song was a flourishing translation center. It became even more popular after Faru moved into the temple. Beyond the question of whether or not Bodhidharma actually resided at Mount Song, Yanagida shows that his association with the Shaolin temple greatly enhanced Faru's importance there.

At the beginning of the eighth century, Faru's fame was challenged by one of the most remarkable figures of early Chan, Shenhui 神會 (684-758). At a debate in 732 in the town of Huatai in present day Henan province, Shenhui attacked Faru and Shenxiu's lineage, which he called the "Northern School", and promoted his own teacher Huineng 惠能 as the sixth patriarch after Bodhidharma and head of the "Southern School". Yanagida lists several points of innovation by Shenhui. Instead of promoting the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* as Chan's main doctrine, Shenhui contended that the *Diamond Sūtra* contained the essence of Bodhidharma's teachings. He also argued that Bodhidharma transmitted his robe to Huike, as a sign of his successor's enlightenment, an argument indicating the importance of the physical robe over the abstract notion of teachings. Most importantly, Shenhui claimed that there could be only one successor per generation to Bodhidharma's lineage. That is, in Shenhui's words:

> It is like the country having only one king; there are never two. Or it is like the world having one Cakravartin (universal) king. . .or in one age only one Buddha.[14]

The Northern School's recognition of both Faru and Shenxiu as Hongren's successors was unacceptable to Shenhui.

Some of the points that Shenhui brought up were already part of Northern School Chan thought. For example, Jingjue 淨覺 (683-c. 750), author of the *Records of the Masters and Disciples of the Lankāvatāra* and a member of the Northern School, had already hinted at the importance of the *Diamond Sūtra* for Bodhidharma's teachings. The novelty of Shenhui's work, John Jorgensen reveals, lies in his ability to

[14] Jorgensen 1987: 103-104.

attune his propositions to a Chinese political audience.[15] Shenhui's idea of one patriarch per generation and his emphasis on his own existence as the seventh generation were appreciated by the elite in Luoyang and in the capital at Chang'an: Shenhui's theory agreed with the supposed order of an imperial ancestral lineage as recorded in the Chinese classic called *The Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記). Indeed, Shenhui's attack and its success are fine examples of the Chinese appropriation of Buddhist thought as identified by Sharf and Adamek.[16] In the words of Jorgensen:

> Shenhui was claiming that the Buddhist equivalent of an imperial lineage was perfected in China with himself, thereby implying that only his lineage was the *zhengfa* or Correct Law (in a Buddhist reading).[17]

While Shenhui's Southern School came to dominate the Northern School in the Chang'an and Luoyang area, it did not lead to a unified Chan movement. On the contrary, Shenhui's set of patriarchs with a new, single seventh figure seems to have acted as a template for others to link up to Bodhidharma too. Teachers and students in the capital Chang'an, as well as in distant provinces such as Sichuan, all traced their lineages back to Bodhidharma. By the ninth century, the earlier rivalry between the Northern and Southern School had given way to a variety of Chan schools competing with each other. Foulk describes how political developments contributed to this widespread dissemination.[18] After the turmoil of the rebellion of general An Lushan 安祿山 in 755, the power of the Tang ruling house had become decentralized. Gradually, imperial patronage was replaced by provincial patronage, which further stimulated the various local Chan lineages. In particular, the importance of provincial patronage became clear in the mid-ninth century. During a major suppression of Buddhism in 845, Chan schools in the capital were affected, while regional Chan schools were often left untouched. In fact, during the Five Dynasties (907-960), provincial patrons supported five large Chan schools that came to be known as the *wujia* 五家 or "five houses" of Chan. These included the lineages of Guiyang 潙仰, Caodong 曹洞, Linji 臨濟, Yunmen 雲門, and Fayan 法眼. Significantly, the

[15] Jorgensen 1987.
[16] Sharf 1991 in Adamek 2003.
[17] Jorgensen 1987: 111.
[18] Foulk 1992.

majority of the practitioners of Chan in the Song belonged to two of these lineages: Linji and Caodong.

The Linji lineage was named after the great Chan master Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄(d. 867) from Zhenzhou, while Caodong derived its name from the names of its two founders, Caoshan Benji 曹山本寂 (840-901) and Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 (807-869), whose monasteries were on Mount Cao and Mount Dong respectively.[19]

The developments of the eighth and ninth centuries were of major importance to Song-dynasty Chan, as they included changes to fundamental concepts of the tradition. Most importantly, the notion of the patriarch had altered. According to the 801 *Transmission of the Baolin Temple* (*Baolin zhuan* 寶林傳):

> Someone who can look at evil without generating distaste, who can look at good without becoming joyful, who does not reject stupidity to gain sagehood, who does not eliminate ignorance to seek enlightenment, who achieves the Great Path and transcends consideration, who penetrates the Buddha-mind and escapes measurement, who is not attached to the distinction between ordinary person and sage: such a transcendent person is called a patriarch.[20]

This was a considerably more practical definition of one of the key elements of Chan. It had the tremendous expansive effect of breaking away from Shenhui's proposition of one patriarch per generation. This allowed the various Chan schools with no direct connection to Shenhui or Huineng to nominate their own patriarchs and think of themselves as part of Bodhidharma's tradition.

Another major trend initiated in the ninth and tenth centuries was the idea of an inclusive Chan tradition: a single Chan lineage incorporating the different smaller lineages that had sprouted all over China. This theory of a unified Chan movement was developed by Zongmi 宗密 (780-841). Zongmi was an adherent of both the Chan and the Huayan traditions. Renowned for his non-sectarian view of Buddhism, Zongmi wrote:

> Essentially speaking, when the doctrines are viewed in a limited perspective, each doctrine is wrong; when looking at them in a comprehensive view, all are right.[21]

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[19]Additionally, the Linji and Caodong lineages, as Rinzai and Sōto, became the two most important schools of Zen Buddhism in Japan, where they were introduced by the monks Eisai 榮西 (1141-1215) and Dōgen 道元 (1200-1253) respectively.
[20] McRae 1993-1994: 71-72.
[21] Jan 1972: 37

Zongmi noted three contemporary Chan schools: the school of Zhixian 智詵 (609-702), the school of Zhixian's disciple Wuzhu 無住 (714-775) and the school of Guolang Xuanshi. Zongmi regarded these schools as "branches" stemming from the "trunk" of the lineage of Bodhidharma. Initially, Zongmi's ideas drew little response, but later his writings were most influential for the formation of Song Chan.

## SONG CHAN

Chan Buddhism in the Song dynasty can be seen as a gestation of ideas conceived in the late Tang and Five Dynasties. The process of this gestation was remarkable, and, recently, contrary to what Ch'en first proposed, a new generation of scholars has come to view the Song, rather than the Tang as Chan's "Golden Age".[22]

At the beginning of the Song dynasty, practitioners of Chan were confronted once more with two long-standing issues: the problem of the Chan lineage and the problem of Chan as a transmission outside the Buddhist texts. Both issues needed to be resolved in order to redefine Chan Buddhism and its place among Buddhist traditions. Members of the Chan lineage made skilful use of both concerns to claim a special status for Chan. They ensured that Chan became the dominant form of Buddhism in the Song dynasty.

The year 952, barely a decade before the Song reunification, saw an ingenious textual exercise in attempting to bring together in one lineage the different Chan schools of the late eighth to mid-tenth centuries. The Zhaoqing monastery in Quanzhou in Fujian province produced the *Patriarch's Hall Collection* (*Zutangji* 祖堂集), now preserved in Korea. This compendium developed a common Chan genealogy based on Zongmi's earlier ideas. It recognized a Chan trunk of 33 patriarchs, from the first Indian patriarch Mahākāśyapa to the sixth Chinese patriarch Huineng. Two main branches were added to the trunk, describing the two main lineages extending from Huineng. The first branch was the lineage of Nanyue Huairang 南嶽懷讓 (677-744), which included the renowned Chan exponent Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709-788); the second main branch referred to the other famous

[22] Gregory and Ebrey 1993, Foulk 1992, 1993 and 1999 and Foulk and Sharf 1993.

lineage of Qingyuan Xingsi 青原行思 (d. 740) and Shitou Xiqian 石頭希遷 (700-790). The main branches next split into subbranches. The *Patriarch's Hall Collection* also noted collateral branches. They referred to Chan masters who had descended from the fourth and fifth patriarchs, rather than the sixth patriarch Huineng.

According to Foulk, the production of the *Patriarch's Hall Collection* heralded the birth of a new, unified Chan school.[23] The *Patriarch's Hall Collection* with its multilinear setup presented the Chan lineage as a lineage of enlightenment, rather than one of successive meditation masters. It included persons from very different backgrounds who all claimed to be descended from Bodhidharma, but preached and practised in very different ways. Half a century later, the Zhaoqing monastery compendium would serve as the prototype for the Song dynasty's most famous genealogical record, the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde era* (*Jingde chuandenglu* 景德傳燈錄). Published under the auspices of the Song court in 1004, this transmission record also presented Chan as a lineage of enlightenment. The Chan masters recorded in this text could be experts of Buddhist literature and philosophy or Pure Land devotees, but they all shared the common feature of the experience of enlightenment. For early Chan masters, enlightenment referred to their accepted connection to Bodhidharma and the ancient patriarchs. In the Song dynasty, an inheritance certificate from a member of the lineage served as proof of enlightenment. The Chan "clan" thus created was an exceptionally diverse group. The diversity of the Chan school was one of the major advantages for its popularity in the Song dynasty: it enabled Chan to attract monks and the laity ---men and women alike--- with a wide variety of interests.

Once the Chan lineage had been defined, members of the tradition needed to establish their position with regard to other Buddhist traditions. While Chan had long been known to be a teaching outside the Buddhist texts, its complete definition was only recorded in the twelfth-century *Anthology from the Patriarch's Hall* (*Zuting shiyuan* 祖庭事苑). This 1154 publication is a record of Chan masters' discourses. Its author Muan Shanqing 睦庵善卿 defines Chan as:

[23] Foulk 1992

> A transmission outside the Teachings, not set up on texts, pointing directly to the mind, seeing into the nature of the mind and attaining Buddhahood. [24]

While presenting the essence of the message of Chan, Muan Shanqing's four characterizing sentences were not an unambiguous definition of Chan's place within Buddhism. Throughout the Song dynasty, the nature and extent of Chan's claim to exclusive transmission remained the subject of controversy.

Foulk notes at least three disputes in the intellectual life of the Song period.[25] The most prominent was that between the Chan school and its most important rival in the Song dynasty, Tiantai. As it happened, the first Indian patriarch of the Chan school, Mahākāśyapa, was also regarded as the first patriarch of Tiantai. Consequently, some practitioners of Tiantai tried to blur the idea of two transmissions. Other Tiantai exegetes accepted Chan as a separate transmission, but not as a superior form of Buddhism: separate transmissions were designated a third position in Tiantai's classification of Buddhist texts and forms of Buddhism.

The second dispute occurred within the Chan school itself, opposing moderate and radical factions. A notable figure among the moderates was Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904-975). In his famous *Records of the Source Mirror* (*Zongjinglu* 宗鏡錄), Yongming Yanshou contends that Chan is but another form of the Buddhist teachings. While accepting Chan as a formless, mind-to-mind transmission, Yongming Yanshou agrees with his predecessor Zongmi that "the mind and the speech of the Buddha cannot be at odds"[26]. Therefore, Chan cannot be regarded as superior to any other form of Buddhism. Radical critics agreed with Yongming Yanshou on the nature of Chan as a formless, mind-to-mind transmission. However, to them this meant that Chan could not be identified with any other form of Buddhism.

The third dispute over Chan's claim to uniqueness is described by Foulk as a subtle tension found within texts of the fundamentalist Chan factions. While contending that Chan was a formless and therefore superior transmission, the fundamentalists had to acknowledge that such a transmission was beyond historical verification.

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[24] ZZK 2-18-1. Foulk translates *bu li wenzi* 不立文字 as "not setting up scriptures", see Foulk 1993: 151.

[25] Foulk 1993: 220-294.

[26] Foulk 1999: 235.

Observing these three debates, Foulk notes the gradual dominance of the fundamentalist position. In particular, in reaction to the Tiantai tradition, which came to profile itself as the school of the Teachings (*Jiao* 教), or Buddhist texts, Chan texts became stronger in their emphasis on their tradition as a superior transmission outside the teachings. Through important works such as the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era*, Chan promoted its superiority. This text regards, for example, the transmission of the Buddha to the first Chan patriarch Mahākāśyapa as another great event in the Buddha's life. The transmission is of the same importance as the Buddha's birth, his enlightenment, his first sermon and his death. Furthermore, a continuation to the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era*, the *Extensive Record of the Flame of the Tiansheng Era* (*Tiansheng guangdenglu* 天聖廣燈錄), was the first compendium to give a detailed description of the transmission, specifying its time and place. According to the *Tiansheng Flame Record* the transmission happened during a gathering at Vulture Peak. At this gathering, the Buddha did not utter a single word, but merely held up a flower (*nianhua* 拈花). Among the thousands who had come to hear him speak, only Mahākāśyapa understood the meaning of this gesture.

Through reference to this and other such concrete acts, the Chan school in the Song dynasty created for itself a set of beliefs: the belief in a tradition of enlightenment and the belief in a separate transmission. Foulk calls this set of beliefs the "Chan myth". He divides adherents of Chan in the Song into two groups. The first group, *chanzong* 禪宗 or 'members of the Chan lineage', includes the ancient patriarchs and their descendants, the contemporary Song Chan masters. The second group, *chanjia* 禪家 or 'Chan adherents', refers to all those who felt affiliated to the Chan tradition: monks and nuns as well as laymen and laywomen. The most distinctive quality of Chan Buddhism in the Song dynasty was the perpetuation of the "Chan myth" through the faith that members and adherents of Chan placed in it. This quality was crucial for the religion's development of an institutional establishment.

## 2. THE SONG CHAN ESTABLISHMENT

Drawing upon the issues of a lineage of enlightenment and a separate transmission, adherents of Chan in the Song dynasty for the first time developed a unified Chan institution. For convenience's sake I refer to this as the Song Chan establishment. It is no exaggeration to say that the Chan establishment in the Song dynasty was organized to serve the Chan myth. The myth found distinct expression in the establishment's monasteries and its artistic productions, but was particularly prominent throughout its extensive literary production.

### THE IMPACT OF THE SONG CHAN ESTABLISHMENT ON THE LATER RECEPTION OF CHAN

The writings of Song-dynasty Chan practitioners were and are extremely influential, not just for the development of the Chan establishment in the Song dynasty, but also for recent theories on Chinese Chan Buddhism in both Western and Japanese scholarship. Song Chan texts inform the work of scholars such as Daisetz Suzuki, Kenneth Ch'en and Tsukamoto Zenryū. On the basis of Song Chan texts, these scholars assume the existence of an independent and distinctive Chan school as early as the eighth century. They contend that this Tang Chan school arose in opposition to a conservative Chinese Buddhist establishment represented by the Tiantai school among others. According to Ch'en:

> Chan masters in China broke away from the Indian dependence upon the sacred scriptures, objects of worship, rituals, and metaphysical speculation to build up a school of Buddhism which favoured a plain, direct, concrete and practical approach to enlightenment.[27]

Scriptures, images and rituals, which featured so prominently in other Buddhist traditions, were, it is assumed, discarded by Chan:

> Chinese Chan was iconoclastic; it had no reverence for literature, images or rituals; it discouraged the study of texts and the exercises of the intellect.[28]

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[27] Ch'en 1964: 362-363.
[28] Ch'en 1964: 398.

Instead, Chan masters would aim to awaken their students to enlightenment through riddles, bewildering dialogues or silent introspection.

The Chan "Golden Age" was assumed to correspond to the late eighth and ninth centuries. According to early Western and Japanese scholarship on Chan, this period was characterized by enigmatic patriarchs making shocking statements. The Chan master Linji Yixuan, for example, is known to have said:

> "If you should meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha. If you should meet the Patriarchs, kill the Patriarchs. If you should meet the Arhats on your way, kill them too."[29]

Chan monasteries in this period were assumed to focus on practicing Buddhism in the midst of daily life, rather than by means of organized devotion. The emphasis was on manual labor and finding deeper religious meaning in everyday activities. Ch'en considers the unprecedented views of Tang Chan patriarchs and records of Tang monastic life found in Song texts as elementary to the popularity of Chan in the Song dynasty. Simultaneously, Ch'en notes, the expansion of the Chan school in the Song contributed to its decline. The simple and relatively small Tang Chan monasteries had given way to grand and lavish Chan complexes in the Song. The traditionally hard-working Chan monks were now merely concerned with monastic forms and rituals. These forms and rituals were imitated and recreated from Tang Chan texts, which were frequently published in the Song for that purpose.

In reaction to the work of scholars such as Ch'en, other scholars, notably Foulk and Peter Gregory, argue that there is no evidence from the Tang dynasty to corroborate the idea of a Chan "Golden Age" in the Tang and a degenerated Chan school in the Song. Texts produced by different Tang Chan schools have been found as part of the collection of the famous "Library Cave" near the town of Dunhuang in Gansu province. Excavated in 1900, the extraordinary collection of texts and illustrations found in this cave in western China has contributed immensely to our understanding of early Chinese history and art. In the decades following the opening of the Library Cave, Hu Shi, Daisetz Suzuki and several other scholars of Chinese Buddhism identified and studied texts associated with different Tang Chan lineages. These scholars agree that the Tang Chan scriptures are historically accurate. They argue that the texts are evidence for the existence of a "pure Chan system" during the

[29] Ch'en 1964: 358.

Tang, as opposed to a degenerating Chan school in the Song. However, Yanagida contends that the information in the Dunhuang texts with regard to Chan is varied and he doubts their usefulness for identifying a "pure Chan system". Most importantly, according to Foulk, the sources do not mention the existence of a unified Chan school, let alone a China-wide system of Chan monasteries, nor do they refer to practices that could in any way be called exclusive to Chan traditions. The idea of a Chan school as a multi-branched lineage is first found in the tenth century *Patriarch's Hall Collection*, while the complete Chan slogan was produced at an even later date, in the twelfth-century *Anthology from the Patriarch's Hall*, mentioned above. Chan monasteries were in fact a creation of the Song government and the Song Chan establishment. Furthermore, all evidence points towards a general similarity of practices in Chan monasteries and other Buddhist monasteries. Worshipping images, reading texts and performing rituals were major activities for all Song Buddhist schools.

In view of the nature of the Dunhuang finds, the Song Chan establishment deserves even more credit for its development and perpetuation of the Chan myth. Indeed, Song Chan believers created a large, all-encompassing movement, simultaneously promoting the Chan myth, and succeeded in turning the myth into an almost tangible reality. Its tangibility in particular will become clear in the discussion of Chan monasteries and art, below and in the following chapter. For now, it is necessary to recognize that perhaps the "true story of Chan" may be found, not in the Tang, but in the various productions of the Song Chan establishment.

## SONG CHAN LITERATURE

The literary output of the Chan establishment in the Song dynasty was massive: Chan writings outnumber by far those of other Buddhist schools. Grasping what this literature was is essential for understanding Song Chan's views of its own establishment and practices, including the practice of visual art.

Chan texts were not only written by Chan monks. Lay people, especially scholars and poets, contributed to the Chan compendium as well. Laymen were sometimes even responsible for important works such as the transmission records. The aforementioned *Extensive Record of the Tiansheng Era* was written by the layman Li Zunxu 李遵勖 (988-1038), a son-in-law of the emperor and an adherent of the Linji

lineage. Song Chan literature may be divided into four types: "flame records" (*denglu* 燈錄), "discourse records" (*yülu* 語錄), "test cases" (*gongan* 公案) and "monastic codes" (*qinggui* 清規).

### *Flame records*

Flame records or genealogical records such as the aforementioned *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era*, were produced on a fairly regular basis in the Song dynasty. Starting with the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era*, several collections of biographies were published by the Song court. After publication, the records were presented to the reigning emperor, who would sometimes write a preface, a significant gesture indicating political support for the Chan school. The records were added to the Song Buddhist canon, the Song dynasty's imperial compendium of Buddhist texts.

Western scholarship tends to translate *denglu* or *chuandenglu*, or 'flame record' or 'transmission of the flame record' as *lamp record* or *transmission of the lamp record*, sometimes shortened to *lamp history*. Foulk has shown that the usage of "lamp" instead of "flame" is problematic. He refers to one of the most famous early Chan texts, the *Platform Sūtra* (*Tanjing* 壇經), allegedly composed by students of Huineng to defend his position as the sixth patriarch of Chan.[30] The *Platform Sūtra* compares meditation (*ding* 定) and wisdom (*hui* 惠) to a flame (*deng* 燈) and its light (*guang* 光). The sūtra says: "where there is a flame, there is light". Replacing "flame" with "lamp" weakens the statement, as lamps can exist without light.[31] In general, a flame seems a better metaphor for describing something as intangible as the transmission of Chan.

The literary genre of biographies of Buddhist monks was already well developed by the time of the creation of the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era*. Famous biographical collections, such as the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* and *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*, as well as the Song-dynasty addition to these collections, the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Song Gaosengzhuan* 宋高僧傳), written by the monk Zanning 贊寧 (919-1001) in 988,

[30] The oldest version of the *Platform Sūtra* now available is part of the Dunhuang collections.
[31] Foulk 1993: n. 20.

were well known and had long become part of the imperial canon. Song-dynasty Buddhists were also aware of the rare biographical collection devoted exclusively to the lives of nuns, the *Biographies of Nuns* (*Biqiunizhuan* 比丘尼傳) of 516.[32] In a discussion of Chinese Buddhist biographies, Koichi Shinohara identifies two major sources for constructing life stories of monks and nuns: inscriptions on stūpas or temples and miracle stories.[33] Stūpa or tomb inscriptions were made for important monks when they passed away, sometimes by famous writers and calligraphers. Temple inscriptions were usually made on festive occasions such as the founding of a temple. Biographers used these inscriptions for the historical facts and events in a monk's life. Collections of miracle stories were used to infuse biographies with a deeper sense of a lifetime's religiosity.

Scholars studying Chinese Buddhist biographical collections tend to focus on the historical facts in often largely mythological tales. We need to recognize, however, that to medieval and later readerships, the distinction between historical fact and mythology was often blurred. This was especially the case for flame records. Flame records were frequently updated and recent publications would include Chan masters that people could still remember. Biographies of recent Chan masters, connected to those of their predecessors, would render the latter even more credible.[34]

The flame records differ from other biographical collections in their emphasis on the encounters between Chan masters and their students, rivals or lay people, and the dialogues that result from these encounters. The dialogues are elaborated upon in great detail. Flame records focus so strongly on these dialogues, that some biographies can be described as a set of randomly connected anecdotes of encounters. Chün-fang Yü argues that encounter dialogues of Tang Chan masters are proof of Chan's preference for "the concrete instead of the abstract".[35] In other words, the preference of Tang Chan masters would seem to lie in practical, everyday dialogues, rather than texts or rituals. While anecdotes of Tang Chan rhetoric are of major importance, this should not keep us from recognizing the presence and influence of Song Chan in the flame records. According to Foulk, the descriptions of the settings in which the dialogues take place betray a Song context: "Tang masters are depicted in monastic settings with facilities, officers and activities characteristic of Song-style

[32] For a study of nuns in early medieval China, see Georgieva 2000.
[33] Shinohara 1988.
[34] Foulk 1993.
[35] Yü 1989.

monasteries."[36] The Song settings would appear familiar to Song-dynasty readers and increase the accessibility of the flame records. Another novel and witty literary device in the flame records is the description of thoughts of Chan masters in addition to their words. As Foulk contends, such descriptions could only have been employed by "raconteurs, poets and novelists"[37], not by actual attendants taking notes during a Chan master's speech. Literary tools such as descriptions of settings and thoughts not only contribute to the flow and readability of the flame records, but are also highly suggestive of a wider circle of publishing, distribution and reception.

*Discourse records*

The fascination of Song-dynasty Chan Buddhists with encounter dialogues becomes even clearer if we look at two other forms of Song Chan literature: the "discourse records" and the "test cases". Widely published in the Song, both discourse records and test cases were collections of words and gestures of Chan masters.

The Japanese Zen master Mujaku Dōchū 無著道忠 (1653-1744) defines discourse records as follows:

> The essential sayings of Zen patriarchs are unconcerned with ornamentation, but use ordinary speech for direct explanations. They are transcribed as such by junior monks serving as attendants. These transcriptions are called "discourse records".[38]

Prior to the Song, sayings of early patriarchs may be found as part of several important Chan texts. As early as in the *Treaty on the Two Entrances and Four Practices*, the non-apocryphal work attributed to Chan's founder Bodhidharma, we find, in the "miscellaneous" section, records of dialogues between Bodhidharma and Huike. Also, according to the *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*, Bodhidharma's sayings (*gaojuan* 誥卷) were in widespread circulation.[39]

Records of the sayings of Shenhui, the founder of the Southern School, are part of the Dunhuang collections. The text *Miscellaneous Dialogues* (*Nanyang heshang wenda za zhengyi* 南陽和尚問答雜徵義) consists of questions and answers

[36] Foulk 1993: 153.
[37] Foulk 1993: 153.
[38] McRae 1993-1994: 81.
[39] McRae 1993-1994: Yanagida suggests that Bodhidharma's *gaojuan*, translated as 'pronouncements fascicle' was, in fact, a collection of Bodhidharma's sayings.

of Shenhui and his students. The question-and-answer pattern was also employed in the *Platform Sermon* (*Nanyang heshang dunjiao jietuo chanmen zhi liaoxing tanyu* 南陽和尚頓教解脫禪門直了性壇語) attributed to Shenhui. Here, Shenhui most importantly connects the method of dialogues with his Southern School's principle of "sudden enlightenment". Shenhui held that effective dialogues could initiate sudden awakening. Effective dialogues, he argued, were superior to gradual cultivation through meditation, the method employed by Shenhui's rivals from the Northern School.

Unfortunately, contemporary discourse records of Tang Chan masters following Shenhui have not survived among the Dunhuang materials or in Japanese collections. It is only in Song dynasty-texts, after a gap of several centuries, that we find collections of the words of famous patriarchs again. The absence of any record of Tang conditions does not allow us to assume that Song practice was an absolute innovation, but these surviving Song texts show crucial practical elements of Chan teaching at the time.

Personalities in Song-dynasty Chan discourse records include the famous eighth-century master Mazu Daoyi and his eminent student Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (749-814). The earliest mention of an encounter between them in the *Extended Sayings of Baizhang* (*Baizhang guangyu* 百丈廣語) is probably the best known. According to the *Extended Sayings*:

> when the master [Mazu Daoyi] came into the hall and said nothing, the student [Baizhang Huaihai] turned over his seat and the master went out.[40]

Apparently, during another typical meeting, Mazu Daoyi let out a tremendous shout which left Baizhang Huaihai deaf for three days.[41]

In his extensive study on recorded sayings, Yanagida Seizan observes two major developments in the discourse records of Chan patriarchs starting with Mazu Daoyi.[42] First of all the records make use of vernacular language. This could lead readers to believe that the sayings were indeed jotted down during a Chan master's speech. The use of vernacular language also suggests a broader, perhaps not

[40] McRae 1993-1994: 101.
[41] McRae 1993-1994: 101.
[42] Yanagida in McRae 1993-1994.

invariably literate audience.[43] Secondly, Yanagida notes, discourse records brought previously unknown students into the limelight. Baizhang Huaihai for example, became well known in part because of his discourse records, which he had modeled on those of his teacher.

The two developments noted by Yanagida actually lie at the heart of the Song Chan enterprise. Looking beyond the face value of the historicity of the discourse records published in the Song, these changes are indications of a reformulation of the Chan tradition. The developments are techniques of which Song dynasty compilers made clever use. Words of Chan masters were crucial to the Song Chan myth. Spoken by members of the lineage of enlightenment, sayings by Chan masters were, in fact, sayings by living Buddhas. Consequently, the words of Chan masters were at least as important as ---if not superior to--- the texts of the Buddhist canon. They could be produced without limits and without the help of editors. They were, in fact, not even supposed to be edited, but only written up in direct, vernacular language. With regard to producing discourse records of figures such as Baizhang Huaihai, Song compilers made important decisions. The compilers' choices were directed towards maximum effect to advance the Chan cause. The benefits that Baizhang Huaihai brought to the Chan myth were tremendous; the section on monastic codes below returns to this point.

In addition to recording sayings of Chan masters, discourse records had another major function. The records were also compendia of inscriptions of Chan masters written on paintings, including their own portraits and portraits of important figures in Chan. These collections, called "Eulogies to Paintings of the Buddha and the Patriarchs" (*Fozuzan* 佛祖讚) or "Portrait Eulogies" (*zhenzan* 真讚), will be primary source material for the next chapters. For now, it is important to note that eulogies written by Chan masters were seen as no less enlightening than their spoken words, and, crucially, attaching these writings to painting and portraiture lent at least similar importance to these categories of visual art.

### *Test cases*

[43] The use of vernacular language here is a literary device, similar in function to the literary tools used in the flame records.

Collections of test cases are unique among Song Buddhist texts as records of a distinctive Chan form of literature, related to a typical Chan practice.[44] While biographical records, discourse records and monastic codes may also be found in other Song Buddhist traditions, test case anthologies were the domain of the Chan establishment. Derived from discourse records, test cases present the sayings of Chan patriarchs as critical statements, questions and riddles meant to initiate a sense of awakening in the reader. While discourse records reported dialogues, test cases were offered as food for thought.

The literal translation of the Chinese word for test cases, *gongan*, is 'magistrate's table', a term for court cases. Spiritual test cases, Foulk contends, were in many ways analogous to court cases. Chan masters would raise test cases in large public assemblies known as "ascending the hall" (*shangtang* 上堂), during minor convocations with monastics (*xiaocan* 小參), or in private interviews with individual monks (*rushi* 入室). If deemed necessary, the master might discuss the case; he would always reserve the final judgment for himself. Foulk notes that even Chan masters' expressions during test case performances were often similar to those used in the legal courts. For example, if they sensed deluded thinking during discussions of test cases, Chan masters would often exclaim "thirty blows!", an actual sentence pronounced by local magistrates.[45]

Song Chan masters used what they believed to be Tang Chan test cases as precedents. They often re-enacted the shouts and dramatic gestures that accompanied the Tang cases. Foulk provides an example of the Chan master Yangqi Fanghui 楊岐方會 (992-1049). During a major convocation,

> Yangqi Fanghui struck the lectern with his staff, shouted and said: 'With one shout and one blow on the lectern the eyes see stars, the nostrils dilate, and the eyebrows raise in surprise. If you get it, the moon sets in the western mountains; if you don't get it, wheat cakes and rice dumplings.' He then got down from the lecture seat.[46]

Scholars such as Suzuki, Ch'en and Yanagida argue that the ritual reenactment of Tang test case precedents is a sign of Song Chan's "pedantic archaism". The cataloguing of test cases and the systematic performance of the cases during fixed

[44] "Test case" is a term used by Foulk. Other translations for *gongan* are 'precedents', see McRae 1993-1994.
[45] Foulk 1993: 172.
[46] Foulk 1993: 177.

moments indicate a decline of standard and quality. Apart from the above-mentioned fact that there is no evidence for discourse records, let alone test case collections from the Tang dynasty, Song test cases were far from fixed.

Two late eleventh-century monks, Yuanwu Keqin 圜悟克勤 (1063-1135) and his student Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089-1161) in particular, are renowned for their efforts to make test cases more accessible.[47] Yuanwu's test cases may be found in one of the best-known Song test case anthologies, the 1125 *Record of the Green Cliff* (*Biyanlu* 碧嚴錄). The style of the *Record of the Green Cliff* is clear, rather than elegant or elusive. Yuanwu provides the reader with instructions, urging them to investigate the words, rather than the meaning of a test case. Interestingly, Yuanwu also brings the element of faith into the study of test cases. He finds faith in enlightenment essential to understanding test cases.[48]

In turn, Yuanwu's famous student Dahui was the first to emphasize the twist or critical phrase (*huatou* 話頭) in a test case rather than the entire test case. He described this new way of understanding test cases with the intriguing visual metaphor of "looking at the phrase" (*kanhua* 看話). According to Dahui, doubt, rather than faith, was essential to the method of "looking at the phrase". By doubting even the existence of enlightenment, a practitioner would truly understand the meaning of Chan. In addition to the new method of "looking at the phrase", Dahui helped to develop another trend that supported the popularity of test cases. He made frequent use of a sermon form known as *pushuo* 普說 or 'general lecture'. General lectures were short sermons that included test cases. These lectures resembled the talks held by Chan masters during large assemblies and minor convocations, differing only with regard to ritual form. Dahui was the first Chan master to use the general lecture format to address a lay audience in particular. He held the lectures on memorial occasions, mentioning the deceased person's name and explaining important Buddhist terms such as karma, or activity, and transmigration. More importantly, during these lectures Dahui defined death as the ultimate critical phrase. Death, he argued, was the most important motivation for seeking enlightenment. Thus, while attending to a deceased person's family's needs by urging them to have faith in karmic retribution,

[47] Hsieh 1994, Levering 1987 and Schlütter 1999.
[48] Hsieh 1994.

Dahui simultaneously attempted to point lay devotees to a higher level of understanding by introducing them to the ultimate test case of death.[49]

### *Monastic codes*

*Qinggui*, the Chinese term for monastic codes, literally means ‘pure rules’. The Chan codes are instructions for the organization of monasteries and their religious and economic activities. The rules apply to a wide range of topics related to Chan monasteries and monastic life: from the layout of a monastery to the rules for meeting an abbot and from the form of funerary services to liturgical manuals. Like biographical records, discourse records and test case collections, Chan monastic codes were published on a regular basis in the Song dynasty. While all versions of the Song Chan codes describe a basic tradition, each edition seems to contain adjustments to contemporary developments. For example, numbers of buildings and offices increase in later editions, and times set for meditation vary.

Martin Collcutt writes that in addition to their function as practical manuals, the Chan codes also served as a sign for other Buddhist traditions of Chan’s independence.[50] He compares the codes to rules for Benedictine and Cistercian Christian orders in medieval Europe. Rules gave these orders “their distinctive imprint and provided a source of institutional vitality and continuity.” Similarly, Collcutt argues, “Chan monastic codes were at once the source and product of sectarian maturity and independence”. The codes were published by an establishment that considered itself independent precisely because it had separate codes.

The strongest evidence for Song Chan’s claim to independence through monastic codes is the Chan establishment’s treatment of what it assumed to be the first Chan code. According to Song Chan monks and lay believers, the illustrious Baizhang Huaihai was the author of the earliest Chan monastic code, the *Rules of the Chan Tradition* (*Chanmen guishi* 禪門規式). Baizhang allegedly established this code out of a dissatisfaction with general Buddhist codes, which he found insufficient for Chan monks. Compared to Song-dynasty Chan codes, the *Rules* is brief and sketchy.

[49] Levering 1987: 181-207.
[50] Collcutt 1983: 166.

Nonetheless, Song Chan Buddhists accepted it as the starting point of an independent Chan monastic tradition.[51]

The *Rules* survives as a supplement to Baizhang's biography in the *Transmission Record of the Jingde Era* and in the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks*. It opens with a clear message:

> Master Baizhang felt that after the founding by the First Patriarch, Bodhidharma, from the time of the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng, and then on, members of the Chan school mostly resided in Lü [Precepts 律] sect monasteries where, although they had their own separate compounds, they did not act in accord with rules of their own on such matters as the exposition of Chan teachings by the abbot or the transmission of leadership. Because he was always concerned with this deficiency, Baizhang said: 'It is my desire that the way of our founders should spread and enlighten people in the hope of its lasting into the future. Why should our school follow the practice of Hīnayāna ['Lesser Vehicle', a derogative name for early Buddhist schools, also known as Theravāda] regulations? What our school believes should not be bound by either Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna. Neither should it arbitrarily differ from them. Our aim should be to take a broad view and synthesize it at the middle ground in establishing the regulations and making sure of their being appropriate for our needs.' Thereupon the master initiated the idea of establishing Chan monasteries separately.[52]

Further on, the text comments on the Buddha Hall, the hall that contains the most important image in a monastery. In effect, this hall is not deemed necessary, for, according to the *Rules*:

> not to construct a Buddha Hall, but only to erect a Dharma Hall [the lecture hall in a monastery] is to demonstrate the way in which the Buddha and the Chan patriarchs transmit to the master of the present generation his exalted position.[53]

Instead, concerning the figure of the abbot, the *Rules* emphasize that:

> a spiritually perceptive and morally praiseworthy person was to be regarded as the honored one (*zun* 尊), a term usually applied to the Buddha worshipped on a monastery's central altar.[54]

Finally, the *Rules* pay special attention to communal labour. In Baizhang's ideal Chan monastery, every member of the monastic community participated in hard work, or, according to Baizhang: "a day without work should be a day without food".[55]

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[51] Collcutt 1983: 166.
[52] Collcutt 1983: 173-174.
[53] Collcutt 1983: 175.
[54] Foulk 1993: 157.

Collcutt, Foulk and Japanese scholars, Kondō Ryōichi foremost among them, doubt the historicity of the *Rules of the Chan Tradition*. Kondō shows that there is no mention of a Baizhang code in Tang dynasty literature or in the writings of Baizhang's contemporaries and disciples. Also, Baizhang's memorial inscription written in 814 does not mention a code or individual regulations.[56] Collcutt considers the possibility that the *Rules* were transmitted orally. But even if Baizhang did compose the *Rules of the Chan Tradition*, he notes, many of Baizhang's regulations were not initiated by Baizhang himself but had precedents that went back several centuries. Manual labour, for instance, was common practice in early Buddhist communities.[57]

Bringing together both the views of Kondō and Collcutt, Foulk opines that rather than regarding the *Rules of the Chan Tradition* as a historical text, we should interpret the Baizhang code as another pawn in Song Chan polemics. According to Foulk, there is a contradictory element in the term "Chan monastery" as Chan claims to be concerned with a particular ideology rather than monastic discipline. The Baizhang code would have served to assert that

> members of the Chan lineage had long been concerned with monastic discipline and that certain features of Chinese Buddhist monasticism had in fact been Chan features from the beginning.[58]

The emphasis of the *Rules* on the role of the abbot served Song Chan Buddhism perfectly: the abbot was central to the ideology behind Song Chan monasteries and their practical functioning, a phenomenon discussed in the section on Song Chan monasteries below. Finally, the Baizhang code helped obscure the fact that most Song Chan monasteries had long existed independently, without the designation "Chan". No evidence prior to the Song corroborates the idea propounded in the *Rules* of the existence of Chan monasteries and of Baizhang as their founder. By exalting Baizhang and propounding his myth and by simultaneously producing and adhering to their codes, the Song Chan establishment cleverly perpetuated their special status.

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[55] Collcutt 1983: 177.
[56] Collcutt 1983: 169-170.
[57] Collcutt 1983:177.
[58] Foulk 1993: 192.

## SONG CHAN MONASTERIES

When the Japanese monk Dōgen 道元 (1200-1253) visited China on a pilgrimage, he exclaimed: "What are now called Chan cloisters are the empire's great monasteries."[59] Dōgen was impressed by the large and powerful Chan institutions which contained

> more than a thousand residents and more than a hundred buildings, with storied pavilions arrayed from front to rear, covered corridors running from east to west and facilities like those of an imperial residence.[60]

Even more impressive than the grandeur of Song Chan monasteries however, is the speed with which they came to dominate the Buddhist landscape in the Song. The term *chansi* 禪寺 or "Chan monastery" is first mentioned in the late tenth century. Less than a hundred years later, the majority of the larger Song monasteries were Chan monasteries.

Like its predecessors, the Song government distinguished between various types of monasteries. In comparison, however, the Song distinction was a more formal division. Previous imperial governments distinguished between registered and unofficial monasteries. They often honored registered monasteries with imperial plaques. The Song state officially divided monasteries into public and private institutions. In private monasteries, abbots chose successors from their own students. Theoretically, the abbacies of public monasteries were open to monks from all Buddhist sects. In practice however, the Chan establishment occupied most of the public monasteries, creating "public Chan monasteries". In these public Chan monasteries, abbots could only be Chan masters, but were allowed to come from the different branches of the Chan lineage.

The Song government also divided monasteries into Chan, Teachings (*Jiao* 教) and Precepts (*Lü* 律) monasteries. Teachings monasteries were monasteries of the Tiantai tradition. Following the Chan precedent, Tiantai successfully petitioned the Song government for public Tiantai monasteries. Generally, Precepts monasteries did not belong to any particular Buddhist tradition. Precepts monasteries were also usually smaller, private monasteries.

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[59] Foulk 1993: 166.
[60] Foulk 1993: 167-169.

The division of Buddhist monasteries into Chan, Teachings and Precepts monasteries was largely theoretical. Writing on Song Chan monastic practice, Foulk says that with regard to layout and activities, similarities between the three types of monasteries abound.[61] He discusses one of the major Song dynasty Chan monasteries, the Lingyin monastery on Mount Bei near the Southern Song capital Lin'an, or present-day Hangzhou. The main buildings of this monastic complex were all situated on or very near to the central axis of the monastery. These buildings could also be found in Teachings and Precepts monasteries, and were sometimes located on the exact same spot in those monasteries.

The buildings on the central axis of a monastery were usually places where the monastic congregation would get together for lectures, worship or meditation. Many of the buildings were open to lay people as well. The main buildings included a Buddha Hall, a Dharma Hall and a Patriarchs' Hall. While these buildings and the rituals held in them were quite similar for different types of Song monasteries, there were certain unique Chan features, which will be briefly introduced below. In particular, certain meanings of visual art arose from specific functions assigned to it in these monasteries.

The Buddha Hall contained the main image of a monastery, an image of the Buddha, which was worshipped daily. The hall was also used for annual ceremonies, such as the birth of the Buddha, and for ceremonies for the emperor. While these ceremonies were common to non-Chan monasteries as well, Chan monasteries were exceptional in their occasional use of an image of the Buddha holding up a flower, referring to the first transmission of the faith to Mahākāśyapa.

Similarly, dharma halls also had the same functions in the different types of Song monasteries. In these halls, abbots would give lectures on Buddhist teachings. But while in Teachings monasteries abbots would preach from the Tiantai scriptures, Chan abbots would address their audience of monks and lay people with test cases, sometimes accompanied by dramatic actions and gestures. Foulk offers a fruitful explanation for the unconventional behaviour of Chan masters during their lectures. The ritual setting of the dharma hall, he suggests, offered the perfect context for a Chan master to change temporarily from his usual role of an abbot to the role of a living Buddha. The words and deeds of a Chan master were not to be taken as a model

[61] Foulk 1993.

for the community of devotees, but were typical of a master's ritual role on such occasions as gatherings in the dharma hall.

Patriarchs' halls were of major importance to Song-dynasty monasteries. They contained the portraits of the patriarchs of the tradition to which a monastery belonged. Chan patriarchs' halls contained portraits of patriarchs of the Chan lineage and of the deceased abbots of the Chan monastery in question. The portraits were worshipped as images of deities and ancestral spirits, with offerings and prostrations. Patriarchs' halls were essentially identity certificates of monasteries: the portraits functioned as visual evidence for the connection between recent abbots and the ancient worthies of a particular tradition, thereby enhancing the credibility and fame of a monastery. For the Chan establishment, which emphasized a lineage of enlightenment and a mind-to-mind transmission, patriarchs' halls were of even greater relevance. Chan patriarchs' halls will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Most interestingly, Foulk shows, there were no Chan monks or nuns:

> the ordination system was regulated by the state and the Buddhist community at large and there was no such thing as a "Chan postulant", "Chan novice", or "Chan monk" in the sense of a monk ordained into the Chan lineage.[62]

There was only one Chan ordination ceremony called the "Bodhisattva precepts". The "Bodhisattva precepts" were a set of guidelines offered to both monastics and lay people. By receiving the Bodhisattva precepts, devotees established a connection with the Chan lineage, but they were not considered full members. Full members went through a long process of selection. Chan abbots would choose personal disciples among the monks and nuns training in their monasteries and, again, if chosen by the abbot, some of these personal disciples could eventually become members of the lineage.[63]

The importance of the Chan abbot cannot be overemphasized. He was not only responsible for choosing heirs to the Chan lineage, but contributed immensely to the propounding of that lineage through his duties as a lecturer in the dharma hall and symbolically, after his death, as part of the lineage in the patriarchs' hall. Chan abbots also acted as mediators between the Chan establishment and the Song political elite. Several Chan abbots are known for their connections with important statesmen,

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[62] Foulk 1993: 161.

[63] For studies on Chan nuns, see Levering 1982 and 1997.

members of court and local prefects. These connections often went beyond personal friendship: Chi-chiang Huang shows how Song officials made it a norm to oversee Buddhist activities, including monks' examinations.[64] The Song elite recommended monks for vacant abbacies, thereby contributing to the preservation of certain monasteries as exclusively Chan institutions. The talents and diverse capacities of Chan abbots were fundamental to the flourishing of Song Chan monasteries and, simultaneously, the Song Chan myth.

## 3. THE CHAN ECCENTRICS

Chan abbots, monks, nuns and lay adherents were key players in the advancement of Chan. The Song Chan establishment revolved around their faith in a lineage of enlightenment and a separate transmission. However, followers of Chan were not limited to believing in ancient patriarchs and contemporary abbots. As noted above, Chan monasteries were in many ways similar to Teachings and Precepts monasteries in the Song. Like their counterparts, Song Chan monasteries were storehouses of religious art and imagery and offered a variety of deities for devotees to focus on. Apart from images of the Buddha, gods of the Buddhist pantheon and deities such as the Kitchen God, which Chan monasteries shared with other Song monasteries, literature and art produced by the Song Chan establishment testify to the unique importance for Song Chan of a group of remarkable figures, the Chan eccentrics.

### *From marginal to elite*

Both Song Chan scholars and modern Western scholarship define the Chan eccentrics primarily as marginal or liminal figures on the fringes of the Chan institutional establishment. The Chinese term for eccentric monk is *yiseng* 異僧. The character *yi* was used in its significance of 'peculiar' or 'singular' numerous times in the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記), a chronological survey of events from the earliest times by the court historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145-87 BCE). Again, in the *Mengzi* 孟子, a collection of dialogues of the philosopher Meng Ke 孟軻 (372-289 BCE), *yi* has the connotation of 'strange' and 'unusual'.

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[64] Huang 1999.

In the Song dynasty, Buddhist biographers and the Chan establishment struggled with the challenge of appropriating a group of exceptional monks. In biographies, the monks are categorized as "miracle workers" (*gantong* 感通), while in collections of Chan inscriptions on paintings, paintings of the monks are mentioned under the heading "wandering saints" (*sansheng* 散聖). Yet, it should be noted that in the Chan establishment "marginal" or "liminal" does not refer to "insignificant" as opposed to "dominant". The Chan eccentrics were only marginal in the sense that they propounded truths outside the norms accepted by society. The eccentrics shared this feature with numerous other monks of the Chan tradition, and of Chinese Buddhism in general. Indeed, tales of eccentric, unpredictable and whimsical monks are found throughout the Song Chan flame records and discourse records, as well as in the various *Biographies of Eminent Monks*. In fact, the sheer number of these anecdotes can be said to testify to a central rather than a marginal position for eccentrics in Chinese Buddhism, and Chan.

Beyond Buddhist circles, eccentricity was a character trait worthy of attention and veneration in other Chinese traditions. Notably, the long tradition of reclusion in China was dominated by independent non-conformists. I will show below that the Chan eccentrics primarily belonged to this tradition. The respect and popularity that eccentricity generated was a major impetus for traditions such as Chan to incorporate its eccentric members and to advance and support them as its spiritual elite.

Additionally, the Song Chan establishment singled out a limited number of these monks for artistic attention. This group of Chan eccentrics developed into a recurring artistic theme. Most prominent were the Tang monks and friends Hanshan, Shide 拾得 and Fenggan 豐干, followed closely by the monks Budai 布袋, Xianzi and Zhutou 豬頭. The following sections will introduce the biographies of Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan. I will examine the position of the monks in the Chinese tradition of reclusion, including their connections with other groups of recluses, in order to define a place for the eccentrics in the Chan tradition. In these sections and in the following chapters it will become clear that the eccentrics were central to Chan establishment, while at the same time being susceptible to adaptation in widely different circumstances, and in response to diverse interests.

## THE BIOGRAPHIES OF HANSHAN, SHIDE AND FENGGAN.

The biographies of Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan are part of Song Chan's most famous genealogical record, the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era*.[65] Their biographies can also be found in the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks*.[66] According to both sources, Fenggan, the most senior of the three monks, was an inhabitant of the Guoqing monastery on Mount Tiantai. Fenggan had peculiar habits. He:

> wore his hair so long that it reached to his eyebrows, and he was clad only in a simple fur garment. One day to the amazement of all the monks, he rode a tiger into the monastery and went singing through the corridor.[67]

During one of his walks in the mountains, Fenggan came upon an orphan, whom he brought back to the monastery and named Shide (literally 'picked up'). Shide was initially given the task of taking care of the lamps in the monastery's dining hall. However, he was soon spotted eating in front of an image of the Buddha and ridiculing an image of the holy man Kaundinya. The monks then degraded Shide to dishwasher in the kitchens. When birds were stealing food from the kitchens, Shide "beat the deity who protected the monastery saying 'You cannot even keep the food away from the birds, how can you protect the monastery?'". The beaten deity appeared in the dreams of all the monks of the Guoqing monastery that night,

> complaining: 'Shide beat me!' The next morning the whole monastery found that they had had the same dream and that Shide was the only person of whom the deity was afraid. This miracle was made known to the county authorities and the title of 'saint' was conferred on Shide.[68]

The *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era* and the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* are conspicuously vague about the origins and dates of Fenggan and Shide. Hanshan is generally best known among the three eccentrics because of his

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[65] T. 2076: 51.433b11-434a18.
[66] T. 2061: 50.831b3-832b7.
[67] Wu 1957: 415. The translations used in this section are excerpts from Wu's translations from the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era*, the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* and the *Preface of Lü Qiu to the Collection of Hanshan's Poems* (this preface served as a source for the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era*'s accounts of the eccentrics, and certain passages are similar).
[68] Wu 1957: 417.

poetic oeuvre. But surprisingly, both biographical sources are similarly obscure with regard to him, too. Hanshan's biographers note that he derived his name, literally 'Cold Mountain', from one of the cliffs of Mount Tiantai, "Cold Cliff", where he seems to have resided. An extraordinary appearance, he "wore a cap made of birch bark, a simple fur garment, torn and threadbare, and wooden sandals for shoes."[69] Hanshan is credited with no less than three hundred poems, which he wrote on rocks, trees and the walls of houses. A frequent visitor of the Guoqing monastery, he befriended Shide, who supplied him with the daily meal's leftovers in a bamboo tube to take back home. According to the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era*, Hanshan and Shide accepted Fenggan as their master after the following conversation:

> Hanshan demanded how a newly disinterred antique bronze mirror could be used without being polished beforehand, to which Fenggan replied: 'A pot made of ice has no shadow, and an ape finds his efforts to drag up the moon reflected in a pool fruitless.' Hanshan said: 'This means that it does not reflect. Will you furnish a more detailed explanation?' Fenggan answered: 'There are thousands of virtues you did not bring here, what do you want me to say?' Both Hanshan and Shide bowed down before him.[70]

Fenggan, Hanshan and Shide's final disappearance from the Guoqing monastery is at least as mysterious as their first appearance on the scene. The account of their sudden departure is told in the biographies through a certain Lü Qiu 閭丘, prefect of Taizhou. Fenggan had once cured Lü Qiu of a serious disease. Upon hearing that Lü was in search of tutors, Fenggan had told him to go to the Guoqing monastery, where he would find Hanshan and Shide, incarnations of the Buddhist deities Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. When Lü arrived at the Guoqing monastery, he found Fenggan's room empty but for the footprints of a tiger. Hanshan and Shide were in the kitchens and laughed as Lü greeted them. They said:

> 'Fenggan has a long tongue. You did not recognize the Buddhist deity Maitreya at sight, why are you making obeisance to us now?' The monks witnessing this scene were surprised. Other monks then hurried to observe this strange event, wondering why a high official should make obeisance to two poor scholars. Then Hanshan and Shide left the monastery hand in hand.[71]

[69] Wu 1957: 412.
[70] Wu 1957: 419.
[71] Wu 1957: 414.

According to the legend, Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan never returned to the Guoqing monastery again.

At the end of Hanshan's biography, the official Lü Qiu is credited with collecting Hanshan's poems and writing a preface to them. Yet even this crucial information does not provide unambiguous details on the origins and dates of the three eccentrics. Neither Song scholars nor modern scholars have been able to agree on who Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan really were. Hanshan in particular, as the acclaimed author of a substantial poetic oeuvre, has been the subject of several studies. Each, however, leads to a different conclusion.

In a thorough study of Tang sources concerning Fenggan, Hanshan and Shide, Wu Chi-yu identifies Lü Qiu as the seventh century governor of Lingzhou, mentioned in the Tang dynasty *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*.[72] According to the *Continued Biographies*, Lü Qiu, who shares his name with the author of the preface to Hanshan's poems, frequently visited a monk named Zhiyan 智巖, whom Wu identifies with Hanshan.

Wu opposes the suggestion that Hanshan may have lived in the eighth century or later. He argues that the biography of the monk Lingyu 靈祐 (771-853), which notes an encounter with Hanshan, was first recorded in the tenth-century *Patriarch's Hall Collection*, and is therefore unreliable. Additionally, Wu finds two verses by Hanshan containing eighth-century proper names of questionable authenticity. Finally, Wu argues that the use of an eighth-century place name in the preface indicates that the preface was written not by Lü Qiu or even a contemporary of Hanshan, but by a later figure, yet to be identified, using Lü Qiu's name.

E.G. Pulleyblank agrees with a seventh-century date for Hanshan.[73] But after an in-depth study of rhyme-schemes, Pulleyblank concludes that Hanshan's poems are the work of different authors living in different times. According to Pulleyblank, poems were added to an original seventh-century corpus up to the ninth century. The preface, he believes, could even be a tenth-century product.

With regard to Fenggan and Shide, scholars seem to be equally diverse in their judgements. Zanning, the author of the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks*, quotes a story about Fenggan from the work of Wei Shu 韋述 (d. 757). Based on the date for

[72] Wu 1957.
[73] Barrett in Hobson 2003: 125.

Wei Shu, Zanning assumes that Fenggan and his companions must have lived in the late-seventh to early-eighth centuries.[74]

T.H. Barrett, on the other hand, argues that as Wei's original text is now lost but for Zanning's quote, "the safest date [for Fenggan] is that of the tenth-century source that cites it".[75] As for Shide, Barrett accepts an early tenth-century date.[76] Furthermore, he concedes to "feeling instinctively uneasy with the earliness of the date [for Hanshan] provided by Pulleyblank".[77] Rather, Barrett points to a compendium on Daoist immortals by the Daoist priest and major literary editor Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933).[78] In this compendium, Du describes Hanshan as a hermit who lived on Cuiping Mountain in Tiantai during the Dali period (766-780). Based on possible allusions to eighth-century events found in Hanshan's poetry and his use of grammar, Barrett is inclined to accept Du's dates.

While the intricate problem of the temporal location of the three eccentrics is fascinating, it is equally intriguing to explore their religious position. Significantly, Du Guangting's compendium of Daoist immortals indicates that Hanshan's perceived religious inclinations were not necessarily Buddhist, let alone Chan.[79] Even more remarkably, the Song authors of Hanshan's, Shide's and Fenggan's biographies seem hesitant as to the three eccentrics' exact function within Buddhism and Chan. In Zanning's *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks*, the three friends are mentioned under the section "miracle workers", instead of the section "practitioners of meditation" (*xichan* 習禪), which in the *Song Biographies* include most figures associated with the Chan school.[80] Similarly, while acknowledging Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan as part of the Chan establishment, the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era* relegates their biographies to chapter 27, one of the last of its 30 chapters, and the last chapter with biographical accounts. Strictly speaking, the three eccentrics are not

[74] Wu 1957: 396.
[75] Barrett in Hobson 2003: 144.
[76] Barrett in Hobson 2003: 131. According to Barrett, Wu reaches the same conclusion with regard to Shide. However, it is unclear where in Wu's study that is implied.
[77] Barrett in Hobson 2003: 126.
[78] The compendium exists in the form of a quotation in the famous Song *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era* (*Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 ), volume (*juan* 卷) 55: 338. Chapter Four investigates the *Extensive Records* and this quotation in more detail.
[79] Two ninth-century poems by Li Shanfu 李山甫 (fl. 874) and Guanxiu 貫休 (831-912) mention Hanshan, again not in an exclusively Buddhist context. See Wu 1957: 394. I return to this problem in Chapter Four.
[80] Without regard for their fame as a practitioner of meditation. For the structure of the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* see Kieschnick 1997: 9.

even considered members of the Chan lineage, because they cannot seem to be connected to masters belonging to the "Chan trunk" of Indian and Chinese patriarchs. Concurrently, Song collections of inscriptions on paintings added to discourse records of Chan patriarchs invariably discuss paintings of Chan eccentrics in the section "wandering saints" rather than in the section "patriarchs"(*zushi* 祖師).

The peculiar approach of Song Buddhist authors and a pre-Song Daoist claim suggest a wider definition for Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan. Particularly helpful in this respect are the comments by Nishitani Keiji, who claims that "the Hanshan corpus cannot be treated as Chan poetry as such", and prefers not to define Hanshan as a follower of Chan.[81] Indeed, before regarding Hanshan or his companions as exponents of Chan, it seems more fruitful to explore other definitions for the three eccentrics and to understand in what way they contributed to the Chan tradition.

### THE THREE ECCENTRICS AS RECLUSES

Above all, the authors of the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era* and the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* seem to indicate that Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan were singular men. Remarkable in appearance and behaviour, they could not be subjected to any standards or expectations. Nonetheless, Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan seem to have shared many aspects of their peculiar nature with other persons. First of all, Song biographies make note of similar traits for other monks of the Chan school. The monk Mingcan (dates unknown) for example, is described by the *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era* as lazy and fond of food. Dressed in rags, he slept in a stable for more than twenty years.[82]

Secondly, it appears that eccentric behaviour was not restricted to Chan monks. The different *Biographies of Eminent Monks* are full of tales of singular personalities. The first edition of the *Biographies* of 531 records the story of the monk Beidu 杯度, who stole a golden statue of the Buddha from a layman. When the owner "gave chase, coming to a river, Beidu tossed a small cup onto the water and wondrously floated

[81] Barrett in Hobson 2003: 149.
[82] Faure 1991: 116.

across it, thereby effecting his escape."[83] In the *Song Biographies*, the monk Fazhao 法照

> who drifted about randomly, wandered into a tavern one rainy day, suddenly shaking himself so that mud splattered everywhere. Since noon had already passed, he could not obtain food by begging [monks were expected to refrain from eating after noon], so he shouted at a boy to buy him some venison, boil it, and sandwich it inside of a biscuit. Fazhao gobbled it down in an instant, without the least sign of remorse, as if there was no one else about.[84]

Above all, when viewed not as Chan eccentrics or even Buddhists, but as non-conformists, Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan belong to an even wider group of exceptional men in Chinese tradition, the group of hermits or recluses.

*The tradition of reclusion*

Reclusion, or the concept of withdrawal, has a long tradition in China. In *Patterns of Disengagement*, Alan Berkowitz describes the phenomenon as a "complex entity".[85] Berkowitz argues against simplistic generalizations found in Western scholarship, which tend to divide reclusion in traditional China into "Daoist reclusion" and "Confucian reclusion". Scholars holding this assumption perceive the "Daoist recluse" to wish for

> the world to transform of itself, reverting to its ideal state without the interference of moral meddlers...[The Daoist recluse aims to] cut all worldly ties. . .disburdening himself of the yoke of moral convention of his own free accord.[86]

A "Confucian recluse" on the other hand, is assumed to withdraw

> as an ethical reaction against the political or moral order of the times, thereby frustrating his personal commitment to public service. . .The Confucian sought to transform the world through moral example, and in reclusion endeavored to implement this goal by starting at the local level.[87]

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[83] Kieschnick 1997: 52. Beidu received his name from his habit of crossing rivers at high speed by means of a wooden cup. Beidu literally means 'crossing by the cup'.
[84] Kieschnick 1997: 53.
[85] Berkowitz 2000.
[86] Berkowitz 2000: 3.
[87] Berkowitz 2000: 2-3.

Berkowitz reveals the problematic nature of such generalizations using the fitting example of Laozi 老子, the alleged founder of Daoism. Laozi apparently "left office 'when he perceived the decline of the Zhou [dynasty]'...he retired and withdrew on account of a fundamentally moral decision", an act which "might properly be seen in terms of the classic 'Confucian withdrawal'".[88]

Berkowitz next elucidates how in the Han dynasty the earliest ideas on reclusion found in such Confucian and Daoist classics as the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), the *Classic of Changes* (*Yi jing* 易經) and the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 are "fleshed out" through historical individuals. Han emperors honour the conduct of these individuals who display "moral correctness, an understanding of the equalization of all things and quietist withdrawal". Among the early recluses mentioned by Berkowitz are the "Four Hoaryheads" (*sihao* 四皓). These four elderly gentlemen "withdrew to the Shang Mountains to avoid the political cruelties of the Qin [dynasty rulers] (221-207 BCE) and to await a more stable time."[89] The four men refused to work for the first Han emperor (known posthumously as Gaozu 高祖, r. 206-195 BCE), but

> they appeared in the capital for several months during 196-195 BCE to aid the cause of the heir-designate when the emperor wished to set him aside. The four men were said to be over eighty years old when they appeared at court; their whiskers and eyebrows were hoary white, whence their name...the worthiness of the Four Hoaryheads was so great that merely being present in the company of the heir-designate was sufficient to sway the emperor.[90]

Following the Han dynasty and during the Six Dynasties (220-589) the phenomenon of reclusion develops in several ways. First of all, in addition to a more or less permanent disengagement, which Berkowitz calls "substantive reclusion", a temporary distantiation or "nominal reclusion", becomes popular in official circles. "Nominal recluses" were officials who withdrew from their duties, only to reappear during stable periods, and often to take up better posts.

The focus of *Patterns of Disengagement* is on the tension between substantive and nominal reclusion and their portrayal in the literature of the Han and the Six Dynasties. Berkowitz therefore dwells briefly on the second major development with regard to reclusion in the Six Dynasties: the influence of religion, notably Buddhism,

[88] Berkowitz 2000: 4.
[89] Berkowitz 2000: 65-66.
[90] Berkowitz 2000: 66-67.

on reclusion. He notes that while "reclusion in China does not take on a religious character, religion provides another variety of reclusion".[91] Through Buddhism, asceticism or renunciation, so closely associated with reclusion in other cultures, is for the first time connected to the Chinese concept of withdrawal. Practically, Buddhist monks often appear to face the same problems as non-Buddhist recluses: Buddhist monks had to decide whether or not to assume official positions and, additionally, whether or not paying homage to the ruler was acceptable.

Wolfgang Bauer expands considerably on different types of reclusion in traditional China, including religious reclusion, and he offers a fruitful approach.[92] He explores varieties of eremitism by looking at how different motives lead to different types of reclusion. Bauer introduces a plethora of possible catalysts for withdrawal from society in China. With regard to religious reclusion, Bauer argues that Buddhism strengthened and intensified Chinese notions of eremitism,

> gently stimulating escapist tendencies long before it had won over the majority of the populace...serving as a catalyst for the emergence of Chinese eremitism as a sort of independent world view.[93]

Buddhism allowed the hermit to withdraw from society just for the sake of eremitism and with no other implications. Simultaneously, and perhaps ironically, the development of Buddhism in the Six Dynasties seems to have heralded the disintegration of this "true" form of eremitism. Buddhist monasticism, Bauer argues, made "eremitism lose its legitimacy as an end in itself". The hermit as a member of the monastic community came to be regarded as favourable compared to the anchoretical or lone hermit. A short-lived phenomenon in the Six Dynasties, independent eremitism was never an option again.

In addition to Buddhism, "nature" and "loyalism" are two other important motives for Bauer. The natural environment, perceived in the Han as "wilderness", was gradually cultivated and understood as "a pleasant place". Literature from the Six Dynasties shows that this development changed the perception of hermits and eremitism too:

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[91] Berkowitz 2000: 12.
[92] Bauer 1985.
[93] Bauer 1985: 173.

> Gradually, the emphasis changed from cautioning against the horrors and atrocities of nature to describing its manifold beauties and, at the same time, from trying to bring the hermit back to civilization to simply visiting him in his secluded dwelling and enjoying his companionship and the pure life in the midst of crudity and chaos.[94]

Simultaneously, closely connected to the concept of equalization, the cultivation of nature stimulated hermits who could stay within society and yet achieve mental superiority. These hermits had understood the equality of all things in the phenomenal world and therefore did not have to migrate physically in order to achieve "inner emigration". Most interestingly, "inner emigration", according to Bauer, was often demonstrated through eccentric behaviour and

> while in earlier times 'pretended madness' had been one of the most convenient excuses for resigning from office and fleeing to the wilderness as a true hermit, madness had now become, in certain cases, a welcome qualification for high appointments.[95]

In the Song dynasty, loyalism became the most important motif for reclusion. Intellectuals refusing to take up duties under foreign rulers who conquered first the Northern and then the Southern Song, used eremitism as an expression of their loyalty. Loyalism had been a catalyst for reclusion in pre-Song times, but in the Song "loyalism became stressed to the point where it outshone all other anchoretical motives", including monasticism.

### *Stages of eremitism*

In spite of the complex tradition of reclusion and the different approaches to withdrawal in China, Bauer believes in a general definition for the hermit:

> the hermit is a person who renounces by degrees (sometimes up to physical or intellectual suicide) contact with the human environment and the pleasures of earthly existence in order to concentrate and intensify his remaining sentiments towards higher goals. He thereby demonstrates as well his disdain of society or the whole world, for which he may be praised or condemned.[96]

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[94] Bauer 1985: 170.
[95] Bauer 1985: 169.
[96] Bauer 1985: 161.

Bauer is particularly interested in what he calls different degrees or stages of eremitism. These stages are characterized by two sets of ideas: escape/solitude and outer/inner forms of eremitism. The escape/solitude-set is most useful when comparing Chinese and Western perceptions of reclusion. Bauer shows that while escape or hiding is essential to the Chinese idea of a hermit, it is only a secondary aspect of the hermit in the Greek or Judeo-Christian system of thought, where solitude is the most important association. Solitude in the Chinese context "represents the aggressive aspect of eremitism. . .more characteristic of the wish for independence than the desire for isolation."

With regard to the set of outer / inner forms of eremitism, Bauer writes that we should understand these forms of retreat in stages. "Outer Eremitism" refers to the most visible, physical withdrawal. A hermit may choose to resign from official duties, live in smaller towns or in the countryside and eventually, abandoning his family, flee into the wilderness, at which stage he is actually recognized as a hermit by society. This spectrum of stages can be expanded by including subsequent steps which lead to an imaginative level:

> The hermit bids farewell to mankind altogether, vanishing into distant, fabulous countries or islands which lie behind almost unsurmountable physical obstacles such as huge mountains or vast deserts and seas. Many Chinese immortals (*xian* 仙) may be counted among such 'hermits'. The final stage of outer retreat is reached when the hermit leaves the world entirely, when he ascends to heaven in 'in bright daylight' as the Daoist 'heavenly immortals' did, or when he becomes a heavenly saint (in Western religion) or a Buddha (in Buddhism). This stage is necessarily associated with the idea of death, although this is rarely expressed; or it may even be interpreted, by means of inversion, as an overcoming of death.[97]

Bauer writes that "Inner Eremitism" is "centered around asceticism". Here again, different stages can be distinguished: "from a certain disinterestedness to fasting, celibacy and sometimes even mortification".[98]

Bauer's spectrum of stages is useful in several ways. Given the long tradition of reclusion in China and the numerous motives for eremitism noted above, it helps distinguish the actual persona of the recluse from his subsequent appropriation and portrayal in literature and art. While in most cases the original motivations of recluses are lost, unknown or diverse, Berkowitz, discussed above, shows that often hermits

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[97] Bauer 1985: 160.
[98] Bauer 1985: 160.

are quickly and easily dubbed “Daoist’, “Confucian” or “Buddhist”. Regarding recluses from the viewpoint of eremitism first, as people belonging to a particular stage of outer or inner retreat, and as Daoist, Buddhist or Confucian only afterwards, may do more justice to the person of the recluse. Also, it can bring to light the motivations a recluse adds to the tradition that finally incorporates them.

*Two examples of appropriated recluses: the Daoist Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove and the Buddhist Arhats*

In his concluding remarks, Bauer characterizes the Chinese hermit as “possibly a defensive, but certainly not an aggressive individualist”. While Chinese hermits did leave society or even the civilized world, they were never out to isolate themselves. On the contrary, many Chinese recluses were intent on “removing all the obstacles that separate the individual from the rest of nature”. Perhaps for this reason, throughout the history of reclusion in China, groups of hermits were equally popular to, if not more popular than lone recluses.

A major group of hermits were the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove.[99] The seven sages were the third-century eccentrics Wang Rong 王戎(234-305), Shan Tao 山濤(205-283), Ruan Ji 阮籍(210-263) and his nephew Ruan Xian 阮咸, Xi Kang 嵇康(223-262), Xiang Xiu 向秀(c.221-300) and Liu Ling 劉伶(c.225-280). The sages played music, drank wine and wrote poetry together. Shortly after their demise, in literature and art from the fourth century onwards they came to be recognized as paragons of pure reclusion.

Ellen Johnston Laing discusses the development of illustrations of the Seven Sages. One of the earliest artistic renderings of the seven hermits is found in a late fourth or early fifth-century tomb near Nanjing (Fig. 6). Portraits of the men are impressed on two long panels of clay bricks on the south and north walls of the tomb. Laing believes that the portraits were based on scroll paintings, an assumption strengthened by their detailed, fine linear design. Most remarkably, she notes, the portraits are radically different from Han dynasty figure paintings. Instead of using the Han formula of formal, dignified figures standing neatly in rows, the Nanjing artists

[99] The “Seven Sages” are a major topic in Chinese literature and art and several studies are dedicated to them, including Holzman 1956 and Laing 1974.

depicted casually, sometimes distortedly posed persons, with bared torsos, arms and legs, and, most importantly, "with specific indications of character and personality". Laing argues that the originality of the portraits is due to the influence of Neo-Daoism over Confucianism during the third to the fifth centuries. The Nanjing artists were intent on expressing individuality, something rarely found in Han "Confucian" portraiture. Laing finds the use of this "Neo-Daoist formula" particularly fitting for a depiction of the seven sages, whom she terms "of Neo-Daoist, anti-Confucian bent".

While the artistic novelty of the Nanjing portraits is undeniable, a "Neo-Daoist, anti-Confucian" definition for the images or, for that matter, for the portrayed persons seems somewhat problematic. The seven sages were primarily recluses, absorbed in their own profound world. While sources note how they sometimes abhorred Confucian ritual, their Neo-Daoist connections are far more difficult to trace. [100] Also, their behaviour seems directed against Confucian ritual, rather than against Confucianism itself. Notably, two of the Seven Sages, Wang Rong and Shan Tao, were intimately involved with officialdom, a major tenet of Confucianism.[101]

On the other hand, regarding the Seven Sages from the viewpoint of eremitism, rather than as "Neo-Daoists and anti-Confucianists", could add a new dimension to the discourse on their nature: it could reveal how much Neo-Daoism and Confucianism were affected by the actions and attitudes of the seven eccentric recluses.

A second example of the appropriation of recluses is offered by a large group of Indian and Chinese Buddhist hermits, the Arhats. Early schools of Buddhism, or Theravāda Buddhism, describe Arhats as able and worthy adepts who had reached the goal of enlightenment.[102] A more detailed ranking is offered by a Theravāda canonical text, the *Jewel Discourse* (*Ratanasuttam*), which distinguishes categories of human beings on the basis of their spiritual achievement. Arhats may be found among the category of "homeless men". This category starts with "ordinary homeless men" and "initiates in need of further instructions". "Adepts", or the Arhats, form the third level within the category of homeless men and are further distinguished according to their level of perfection. The *Jewel Discourse* moves on to the "Pratyekabuddha" (a kind of Buddha who lives in seclusion and obtains emancipation for himself, as distinguished

[100] Holzman 1956: 337.
[101] Calling the sages "anti-ritualists", as Donald Holzman does, seems, in any case, a better option, see Holzman 1956: 336.
[102] Tambiah 1984.

from the Buddha who also liberates others) and, finally, to the "fully enlightened Buddha". Although the Arhats were not ranked as superior to the Buddha, they came to act as exemplars for Buddhist devotees. While the Buddha was an exceptional being, the Pratyekabuddhas were no less rare. An Arhat, as a less perfect being, was in many ways closer to an ordinary human and could be regarded as a model for practitioners.

In his study of Buddhist saints, Stanley Tambiah shows how the first group of four Arhats, consisting of immediate disciples of the Buddha, gradually expanded into a group of eight, sixteen and finally eighteen members. After their introduction to China, the Arhats seem to have grown exponentially in number: while sixteen or eighteen Arhats were most commonly revered, Chinese Buddhism in fact knows a total of 500 Arhats. Notably, Chinese Buddhists expanded the traditional Indian set of Arhats by adding popular figures from their own tradition. For example, the eighteen Chinese Arhats often include the well-known monk Xuanzang 玄藏 (600-664) and the Chan eccentric Budai.[103] Indisputedly part of Chinese Buddhism, images of the Arhats could be found in all types of Buddhist monasteries, including Chan monasteries. Of Theravāda origin, the Arhats were accepted by Mahāyāna Buddhism as protectors of the Law, and sometimes even turned into Bodhisattvas.[104]

Nonetheless, Tambiah reminds us of the primary role of recluse played by the Arhat in his discussion of the troubles the Arhats faced in the time of the Buddha. He explains how the Buddha allowed recluses to live outside the Buddhist community as long as they were ordained and returned to the community from time to time to participate in certain celebrations.[105] Additionally, several early Buddhist texts note the problem of ascetics, as figures outside the reaches of supervision and suspicious subjects for the established community. In the words of Tambiah:

> Mahāyāna Buddhism would have little to do with any enlightened being who was not able or concerned to teach others the truth; and though Theravāda has something to say about him [the recluse], he is nevertheless a puzzling being whose incompleteness is thrown into relief by comparison with the Buddha himself.[106]

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[103] Faure 1991: 267 n 22.
[104] Tambiah 1984: 23.
[105] The "forest-dwelling" sect of Buddhism in Sri Lanka still practices this type reclusion today, see Tambiah 1984: 17.
[106] Tambiah 1984: 19.

In other words, compared to the Buddha, the Pratyekabuddhas were often overruled. In addition, the Buddha himself offers the most tantalizing answer to the problem of defining recluses. Tambiah notes how once Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin as well as his challenger, in order to "stir up a division in the community", proposed that monks

> should be permanent dwellers in the woods: whoever went to the vicinity of a village would thereby commit an offense. They should, their lives long, beg for alms and be disallowed from accepting invitations. They should dwell under the trees and not sleep under a roof. They should, finally, abstain from eating fish.[107]

To this, the Buddha simply answered:

> Whosoever wishes to do so, let him dwell in the woods; whosoever wishes to do so, let him dwell in the neighborhood of a village. Whosoever wishes to do so, let him accept invitations from the laity. Whosoever wishes to do so, let him dress in rags; whosoever wishes to do so, let him receive gifts of robes from laymen.[108]

The tradition of reclusion in China and the above examples of recluses reveal the complexity of the problem of the recluse and his appropriation by a particular tradition. Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan, eccentrics and recluses in their own time, were appropriated by a newly founded Chan establishment, a phenomenon that will be discussed in the next section.

## HANSHAN, SHIDE AND FENGGAN AS PART OF THE CHAN TRADITION

### *Eccentric Monks in Buddhist Biographies*

Early in *The Eminent Monk*, John Kieschnick asks the important question of what meat-eating and wine-drinking eccentric monks are doing in biographies of eminent monks, for the *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, the *Continued Biographies* and the *Song Biographies* were all written:

> on the one hand to present politically powerful figures with examples of the worthiness of the *sangha* [Buddhist monastic community]; on the other hand they were to provide monks with *exemplars* worthy of emulation.[109]

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[107] Tambiah 1984: 19.
[108] Tambiah 1984: 19.
[109] Kieschnick 1997: 54.

The irregular and sometimes wild behaviour of the monks in the *Biographies* could hardly be a worthy example. Kieschnick finds his question answered in an addendum to one of the stories in the *Song Biographies* of Zanning. Zanning explains:

> Let it be known that those who have achieved the "verification of fruition" may make use of unorthodox means in the service of Buddhism. In the end, the unenlightened are aroused and then return to the truth.[110]

According to Zanning, the function of eccentric monks was purely didactic. Their conduct was never impulsive, but a sign of their superiority, and everything they did was for the enlightenment of others.

Kieschnick contends that Zanning's explanation in fact enabled him to defend the Buddhist community against the danger of marginal figures such as the eccentrics. Recluses living beyond the reach of supervision were threatening to society and hence easy targets for opponents of Buddhism. The only way to deal with this problem was to "tame the eccentric".

By taming the eccentric however, Zanning also shows how important marginal figures were for the Buddhist tradition. It was the popularity of the eccentrics, more than the threat they posed, that led to their appropriation.

Meir Shahar elucidates this phenomenon through the story of another Buddhist eccentric, Daoji 道濟 (d. 1209).[111] In a rich study of this monk and popular deity, Shahar shows how, like many other eccentric monks, Daoji was an itinerant miracle worker venerated by the laity and celebrated in literature and art. The monastic establishment, initially reserved because of Daoji's meat-eating and wine-drinking habits, eventually could not but approve of his charisma.

*Chan domestication of the marginal*

In *Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan / Zen Buddhism* Bernard Faure expands on the role of the liminal figure for Chan.[112] Importantly, his analysis describes how the Song Chan establishment domesticated the marginal, and how the

[110] Kieschnick 1997: 58.
[111] Shahar 1998.

eccentrics developed from thaumaturges, or wonder-workers, to tricksters and Bodhisattvas.

According to Faure, liminal figures legitimate sectarian, doctrinal and dynastic structures

> because they have advanced on the dangerous margins of social order, at the risk of losing themselves, they are capable of tapping the reservoir of power at the bottom of human society and therefore legitimate social order.[113]

Further, marginals play an important role between the structures of official and popular religion. They travel between these two structures, constantly threatening and reinforcing them as fearful or venerated elements.

Popular religion is a contested topic in the field of Chinese studies. It is often somewhat carelessly used to point to beliefs and practices outside the three main traditions of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Additionally, this usage frequently implies an opposition of "popular" or "folk" religion as a "lower" form of religion, versus "official" religion as the religion of "the elite" or "upper class", paradoxically perpetuating the distinction found in Chinese historical documents between "the elite" and "folk".[114]

Catherine Bell convincingly shows that the terms "popular" and "folk" religion and the interpretations associated with them are fundamentally flawed.[115] Both terms draw forced lines between social groups and their religious experiences, instead of emphasizing mutual influences and similarities. Bell suggests using the term "religious culture" instead. "Religious culture" is based on symbolic activities, rather than social groups. These symbolic activities, including pilgrimage, unify people from different backgrounds, while respecting their individual motivations.

While Faure prefers a systemic approach as opposed to a dichotomy between popular and official religion in China, he acknowledges that we should also take into account the traditional literati discourse on religion, and recognize, at least broadly, the structures of official and popular religion. He provides examples of several Buddhist monks, many of them Chan monks, who moved between the two structures as wonder-workers, performing miracles and predicting the future. The *Biographies of*

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[112] Faure 1991: 96-129.
[113] Faure 1991: 96.
[114] Gernet 1995, Ch'en 1964 and 1973 and Lai 1987.
[115] Bell 1989.

*Divine Monks* (*Shenseng zhuan* 神僧傳) tells of the most notable among these monks Yixing 一行, who allegedly predicted, albeit cryptically, the An Lushan rebellion to emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712-756).[116] Again, the Chan monk Yuangui 元珪 subdued the deity of Mount Song, the central peak in a system of cardinal mountains developed during the Warring States (475-221 BCE) and Han periods and the later location of the Shaolin temple, and the sixth patriarch Huineng is credited with taming a dragon.[117]

However, Faure writes, early on, Chan Buddhism opposed the magical performances of its monks. While magical feats by monks who eventually became Chan patriarchs are found in the *Continued Biographies*, early Chan texts such as the *Records of the Masters and Disciples of the Lankāvatāra* consistently omit any allusions to magic. Building on the existing Buddhist ambivalence towards displays of the supernatural, historians of Chan profiled a tradition that "did not revere magic, only clarity of vision".[118] Thus, Faure elucidates how Chan, in order to domesticate its occult elements, transformed thaumaturges into tricksters: worldly, rather than otherworldly eccentrics. Thaumaturges and tricksters are contrasting figures. While the thaumaturge is associated with death, or a world-denying attitude, the trickster is associated with life or a world-affirming attitude. Tricksters do not consciously subdue evil, but dispel it through laughter, simply by denying its existence. Both thaumaturges and tricksters transgress social norms, but while thaumaturges still follow Buddhist rules, tricksters find themselves above such rules. Neither form of eccentricity is fixed, however, and the shift from thaumaturge to trickster was not absolute. Faure defines Hanshan and Shide as tricksters, but acknowledges that there is an "eerie, otherworldly aspect to them".

Faure writes that the emergence of the trickster seems to coincide with the development of the Song Chan establishment. He believes that the trickster may symbolize an inverted image of the Chan monk, who gradually loses his liminal status. Idealizations of "personages such as Hanshan then paradoxically reflect a loss of the experience they symbolize".

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[116] Faure 1991: 99. There seem to be no dates for the *Biographies of Divine Monks*; a preface for the text was written 1417 by the Yongle emperor 永樂 (r. 1403-1425).

[117] On the Five Marchmounts (*wuyue* 五嶽), see Kleeman 1994 and Robson 2004.

[118] Faure 1991: 107.

The last stage of Chan domestication of the marginal is indicated by a shift from trickster to Bodhisattva. In this stage, biographies of monks pay more attention to their social activities, while "the most popular monks are readily perceived as Bodhisattvas". While Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan are also subjected to this shift and sometimes regarded as the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra and Maitreya, Faure argues that the primary example of this new ideal is the Song monk Pu'an 普庵 (1115-1169). Pu'an became a protector of temples and sea roads in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. Unlike the eccentrics, Pu'an, as a Bodhisattva figure, stressed the observation of the Buddhist precepts and interpreted reality as society and culture, rather than the eccentrics' ideal of nature.

While I agree with Faure that the eccentrics were never static characters, I do not concur with his views of a gradual development and domestication for these unruly monks from thaumaturge to trickster and Bodhisattva. Instead, following Bell's system of "religious culture" mentioned above, I would argue that the eccentrics function as a "symbolic activity", or rather "symbolic figures" traveling between different social groups, beliefs and motivations. Throughout, the monks were vital to Chan establishment, not only as thaumaturges, tricksters and Bodhisattvas, but also as saints who represented different qualities and appealed to different kinds of devotees. Further, beyond the Chan establishment, the eccentrics' complex personae were susceptible to adaptation in widely different circumstances, and in response to diverse interests. This will become clear when we study the monks as part of Song and Yuan literature, religious practice and, most important, visual art.

# Chapter Two
# Portraits and Presence: The Eccentrics in Art

## 1. THE ECCENTRICS IN ART

### HANSHAN AND SHIDE, ATTRIBUTED TO LIANG KAI

A typical image of the eccentrics Hanshan and Shide is attributed to the Song-dynasty painter Liang Kai 梁楷 (act. first half of the 13th century) (Fig. 1). The image is a hanging scroll, painted with ink on silk. The painting, held in the Masaki Art Institute in Osaka, shows the two friends standing amongst rocks and shrubs. The composition of the image is refreshing. Hanshan and Shide are shown huddled together: only a few bold strokes of ink have been used to indicate their separate bodies, which seem to merge into one. Hanshan assumes a leading role in the image. His left arm is stretched out in a diagonal, with the index finger pointed towards the distant left. Hanshan's face however, is turned towards the right, thus creating a perfect balance in the illustration of his figure. The artist has paid much attention to details of the face. Hanshan's face is contorted yet smiling: his eyes are narrowed, his cheeks stand out and his teeth can be seen clearly in an opened mouth.

In a compositional contrast with Hanshan, the viewer sees Shide not from the front, but from the back. We can only just discern a part of the right side of Shide's face. He holds a broom and wears shoes. Attentive and with a slightly bent back, he seems on the point of accompanying Hanshan and following him into the distance.

One of the most outstanding characteristics of the Masaki image is its strong suggestion of movement. Movement is primarily suggested through composition. Hanshan and Shide are standing opposite each other in a way that indicates that they are up to something, on their way somewhere, or engaged in a discussion. The eccentrics' disposition towards each other is echoed in the opposition between Hanshan's stretched out left arm and his face, turned towards the right, suggesting arrested motion.

Details of visual representation also describe movement. An example is the eccentrics' hair which is shown dishevelled, as if blown about by the wind. Hanshan's locks move to the right, while Shide's hair seems to be blown into his face from

behind. The wind may also have contributed to Hanshan's contorted face and Shide's slightly bent body. The monks' robes and the few plants in the painting similarly sway to the right.

In addition to its painter's attention to movement, the Masaki image is also characteristic in its complete focus on the two eccentric friends. Hanshan and Shide are standing in an entirely secluded spot, the emptiness of their surroundings broken only by a few shrubs and rocks. With no other diversions, the viewer's full attention is immediately directed towards them. Furthermore, looking at two people in complete emptiness, viewers almost feel like intruders who suddenly find themselves in an ethereal and otherworldly setting.

In capturing movement and in focusing completely on the eccentric monks, the Masaki image seems to follow a particular trend common to all portraits of Chan eccentrics. In many such images, typically, the monks are shown in action. They are shown as writing, reading, sewing, or engaged in discussion with each other against an empty or near-empty background. Also typically, the painter appears, like a photographer, to have secretly captured the monks in this activity, without letting them know. Painter and viewer become intruders in another world.

The Masaki image is representative of characteristics of visual representation unique to what I define as the corpus of paintings of Chan eccentrics. These characteristics differ strikingly from examples of other Song and Yuan dynasty portraits and figural art. This chapter shows that paintings of Chan eccentrics are a visual category. I also argue that this visual category relates directly to fundamental issues in art history, which I will discuss in section two. Finally, in the third section, I introduce issues of likeness and presence in Chan commentaries on portraits and I show how these commentaries question ideas about portraits and art. The following pages first introduce the corpus and distinguish its different groupings.

## PAINTINGS OF CHAN ECCENTRICS: THE CORPUS

### *Estimated size of the corpus*

The Masaki image of Hanshan and Shide is one of at least 76 surviving Chinese paintings of Chan eccentrics. Reproductions of these paintings can be found in several contemporary catalogues, the most important being Kei Suzuki's *Comprehensive*

*Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Paintings*.[119] The majority of these paintings are from the Southern Song and Yuan dynasties. Paintings of this period are the main focus of this study. Additionally, there are at least three paintings attributed to the Five Dynasties, and there are sixteen paintings attributed to the Ming and Qing dynasties.[120]

In addition to published reproductions, the second major source for gaining an estimate of the total number of paintings of Chan eccentrics is the "Portrait Eulogy" section of Chan discourse records, introduced in Chapter One. Between the late-eleventh and early-fourteenth centuries, no less than 160 inscriptions written by Chan masters on paintings of Chan eccentrics were added to their discourse records.

Notably, many surviving examples of paintings of Chan eccentrics do not contain any calligraphy or seal impressions. Such paintings are not mentioned individually in the Chan canon. Therefore, these paintings point towards the existence of other paintings of eccentrics that, for lack of inscriptions, did not merit mention in Chan discourse records, and did not survive physically either.

Representations of Chan eccentrics are found in other formats than painting, too. Presently, there is one extant rubbing from the Song, one from the Jin (1115-1234), and one from the Yuan dynasty (Figs. 26-28). Rubbings are made using ink and paper from original illustrations carved in stone and can easily be reproduced in large quantities. The Song, Jin and Yuan rubbings are therefore indicative of even higher numbers for images of Chan eccentrics and, furthermore, they suggest extensive and widespread circulation. Additionally, to date, two sculptural representations of Chan eccentric monks have been identified (Figs. 24-25). These sculptures are of Budai. They are part of a Yuan dynasty cave complex near Hangzhou. While not the main focus of this study, rubbings and sculptures of Chan eccentrics are essential for gaining a sense of the variety of representations and their concomitant values that images of these monks encompass. Therefore, subsequent chapters will discuss rubbings and sculptures, too.

Based on these four indicators, it is safe to say that within a relatively short period of approximately 200 years, a substantial number of over a hundred or indeed

[119] Suzuki 1983.
[120] Japanese paintings of Chan eccentrics do not fall within the scope of this thesis. However, references to Japanese examples will be made occasionally in the following discussion.

several hundreds of paintings of Chan eccentrics must have been created and have circulated.

*Characteristics of visual representation*

Contemporary histories of Chinese painting typically refrain from classifying paintings of Chan eccentrics as a unique category of Song and Yuan dynasty art production. Overviews, such as the essays in Yang Xin's *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, devote short essays to "Chan art".[121] However, within the space of only a few pages, these essays cover topics that differ widely with regard to theme as well as stylistic execution, such as portraits of historical abbots and paintings of the Bodhisattva Guanyin.

Specialist studies of Chan art and painting devote considerably more attention to paintings of Chan eccentrics. Yet, the authors of such studies rarely emphasize a consistency of characteristics of visual representation in illustrations of this particular theme. For instance, Jan Fontein and Money Hickman's in-depth catalogue *Zen Painting and Calligraphy* contains several examples of paintings of Hanshan and Shide.[122] However, Fontein and Hickman discuss these paintings primarily as examples of the wide variety of Chan artistic production, which includes, again, such diverse topics as portraits of historical abbots and illustrations of the Buddha coming out of the mountains (*chushan Shijia* 出山釋迦).[123] The limited space of exhibition catalogues such as *Zen Painting and Calligraphy* does not allow for an exploration of different examples of the same artistic theme. Exceptional qualities of certain paintings are in such cases often unambiguously credited to the excellence of a particular artist, rather than discussed as characteristic of a unique category.

Helmut Brinker's fundamental work on Chan portraiture, while touching upon paintings of eccentrics, focuses primarily on portraits of historical abbots.[124] Brinker and Hiroshi Kanazawa's recent *Zen Masters of Meditation in Images and Writing* considers the category of paintings of eccentrics, but again only as part of the wider context of "Chan art", and hardly as evidence for a novel type of visual production.[125]

[121] Yang 1997.
[122] Fontein and Hickman 1970.
[123] For an informative article devoted to this interesting theme see Brinker 1973b.
[124] Brinker 1973.
[125] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996.

If we focus on examples of the category of paintings of eccentrics, its singular visual characteristics immediately become evident. These characteristics are, most importantly, a sense of movement and a peculiar organization of space.

*Movement*

The sense of movement suggested in the Masaki image discussed above can be seen in every single illustration of the Chan eccentrics. In a fine example from the Tokyo National Museum by the illustrious artist Yintuoluo 因陀羅 (act. second half of the 13th-first half of the 14th century), we see Hanshan and Shide seated in, again, a secluded spot (Fig. 2). Yintuoluo uses finer brushstrokes than Liang Kai, and his figures are usually less voluminous in appearance. However, with regard to thematic characteristics, Yintuoluo's rendering of the eccentrics is very similar to that of Liang Kai. The monks are facing each other, obviously engaged in a lively discussion: one extends his left arm with, again, a pointed finger, while the other seems to be listening attentively, with clasped hands and thumbs pointed towards his opponent. Hanshan and Shide are both grinning broadly, which adds to the sense of vivacity exuded by the painting. The artist uses darker strokes for significant details, such as for sashes of the monks' robes, parts of plants in the foreground and background, and the branch of a pine tree dangling above the monks' heads: all these elements are almost palpably in motion.

A sense of movement is an important feature even in paintings showing the eccentrics asleep. For example, a hanging scroll by an anonymous painter in the Tokyo National Museum shows Hanshan, Shide, Fenggan and Fenggan's tiger in a deep slumber (Fig. 3). This painting is exceptional in its rendering of the monks in an elaborate landscape with rolling clouds and different kinds of trees; it may well be the only one of its kind in a theme dominated by empty to near-empty backgrounds. However, when we direct our attention to the four sleepers, we are struck by the similarities this image shares with other examples of the category of eccentric painting. We see this primarily in the eccentrics' remarkable postures. Hanshan, Shide, Fenggan and Fenggan's tiger are entangled, lying in a heap rather than neatly separate and stretched out. The composition is never disordered: two of the monks are shown in profile with arms spread, one symmetrically repeating the movement of the other.

Rather, the combination of these two symmetrically positioned eccentrics and the relaxed-looking figures of the tiger and the third monk enliven the composition as a whole. The tiger is snoozing, head on its front paws. The rest of its body engulfs the bodies of Hanshan and Shide. One of the two friends rests his head in the lap of the other, who bends forward. Through this composition, the Tokyo National Museum painting manages to perfectly render sleeping as an activity, rather than a state of stillness.

In their explicit description of movement, paintings of Chan eccentrics differ fundamentally from other art productions associated with the Chan school. The differences are particularly clear when we look at portraits of historical Chan abbots. A well-published fourteenth-century portrait of the abbot Gaofeng Yuanmiao 高峰原妙 (1239-1295) with his assistants Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263-1323) and Duanya Liaoyi 斷崖了義 (1263-1334), presently in the Shōfukuji in Fukuoka, is detailed in its rendering of the attitudes of the persons portrayed (Fig. 4).[126] The image brings out the particular characters of each of the three monks through a brilliant contrast between Gaofeng Yuanmiao's rigor, manifested through his sharp facial features, and Zhongfeng Mingben's soft expression and gentle smile. Yet simultaneously, the style of this painting prevents the individual personalities of Gaofeng and his assistants to become fully explicit. The monks all seem to have posed for the painter in a context that is formal and still.

This image contrasts sharply with a roughly contemporaneous painting of Hanshan, Shide, Fenggan and Fenggan's tiger attributed to Yintuoluo in the Kyoto National Museum (Fig. 5). The three monks in this image do not face the painter, and seem to have been caught unawares. Fenggan's elbow rests on the tiger, and he is craning his neck to listen to Hanshan and Shide, who face him holding an open scroll. The grins on the faces of all three monks and the tiger are inviting and enhance the sense of liveliness and sparkle found in the painting.

Paintings of Chan eccentrics are sometimes better compared with similar imagery found outside Chan circles. Ellen Johnston Laing discusses the aesthetics of illustrations of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove in Chinese painting.[127] In this research, introduced in Chapter One, she describes how in one of the earliest

[126] Brinker 1973: fig. 38.
[127] Laing 1974.

renderings, the Nanjing portraits from the late fourth to early fifth centuries, artists utilize novel visual terms to suggest the characters of the individual sages. The Nanjing portraits show the sages in distorted poses, with bared torsos, arms and legs (Fig. 6). Later artists of the same theme built on these figure poses.

At first glance, there is a striking resemblance between paintings of the Seven Sages and paintings of the Chan eccentrics. The Nanjing portraits illustrate each sage's mood: the recluses are shown absorbed in activities, from drinking wine to playing musical instruments. Some sages delicately lift their arms and fingers to hold a cup or to touch the strings of a zither, others are shown reclining with bodies slanted slightly to the right or the left. The sages are placed in spatial isolation, with trees separating each sage from the other.

Laing convincingly argues that the early renderings of the seven sages at Nanjing are character studies, rather than pure physical portraits, and she shows how later artists of the same theme attempt to emulate the characteristics of the Nanjing portraits. She provides three examples from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one by an anonymous artist, one by Liu Zhongxian 劉仲賢 and one by Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 (1598-1652).[128] She shows that these artists consciously try to reiterate the sense of spontaneity in the Nanjing originals.

However, in spite of the apparent similarity in manner of execution of paintings of the Seven Sages, none of the examples mentioned above is as animated as paintings of the Chan eccentrics. Notably, while each example suggests movement, it simultaneously suggests a restriction of movement. First, the sages' limbs may move, but this movement can be described as shifting, rather than actual motion: the sages' limbs are never completely stretched out. Secondly, the sages' robes, while swirling, are draped carefully and neatly around their bodies, rather than being blown about. Furthermore, the sages' faces, while suggestive of certain sentiments, never take such suggestion further toward observable fact.

Not only are illustrations of the Seven Sages different from paintings of Chan eccentrics with regard to the degree of expressiveness in movement; compared to paintings of Chan eccentrics they also vary strikingly with regard to the use of space on the painted surface. Notably, in the examples mentioned above, the sages are never

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[128] The painting attributed to Liu Zhongxian is dated 1437. Laing reports that there is no painter known by this name and that the painting may be a forgery of a painting by Liu Guandao 劉貫道 (1270-1354), whose style name (*zi* 字) was Zhongxian.

shown together in a single scene. In the Nanjing portraits, trees separate the sages from each other. The latter three examples by the anonymous artist, by Liu Zhongxian and by Chen Hongshou are of the handscroll format, a type of illustration that requires a rolling and unrolling of the painted scroll and therefore allows only a limited view at any moment. In the handscrolls the sages can never be seen together at once. Additionally, these examples also illustrate attendants to the sages, smaller figures carrying fans and bowls. The attendants and their activities draw the viewer's attention away from the sages.

However, the difference discussed here is not just a difference of format. Illustrations that show the Seven Sages in a single scene differ from paintings of eccentrics, too. The most important distinction is the strong indication in paintings of eccentrics of a conscious use of available space, or what I would call the organization of space. In addition to an exceptional sense of movement, the remarkable organization of space on paintings of Chan eccentrics is the second unique visual characteristic of this category of art.

### *Space*

As noted, the eccentrics are almost always depicted in an empty space. Even in the Tokyo National Museum illustration of the four sleepers in a landscape, the singular attention to the landscape setting does not allow for the presence of other figures, not even through such architectural indications as pavilions. Most importantly, however, in paintings of eccentrics, empty space is never simply a passive component of the composition, but comes across as having been purposefully employed to focus a viewer's attention on the Chan monks.

The illustration of figures on a blank ground has a long tradition in Chinese art history. Many early pictorial works, such as wall paintings in tombs, show persons against empty backgrounds. A typical example is a scene on a screen found in the tomb of the fifth-century nobleman Sima Jinlong, with three ladies standing in an otherwise empty setting.[129] Famous examples of early Chinese painting similarly do not privilege backgrounds, or only suggest background settings. For instance, *The Admonitions of the Court Instructress* (*Nüshizhen tujuan* 女史箴圖卷) attributed to

[129] See a reproduction in Clunas 1997: fig. 13.

the canonical figure painter Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (c. 344-c. 406), shows, in one of its well-published scenes, the emperor rejecting a court lady in complete emptiness. This approach is reiterated in figural art of the Tang dynasty, where famous painters such as Yan Liben 閻立本 (d. 673) and Zhou Fang 周昉 (c. 730-c. 800) illustrate their figures in minimal surroundings, for example, by only hinting at garden settings.

In all of the above examples, the viewer's attention is directed towards the portrayed persons, too. Yet, this is primarily because the paintings lack surrounding detail. The viewer can only distinguish subtleties of expression and composition after focusing attention on the portrayed figures. The process of channeling a viewer's attention to an undivided focus on the figure portrayed is never emphatically stimulated by the illustration itself.

Paintings of eccentrics, on the contrary, make clever and explicit use of space in order to draw undivided attention to the monks portrayed. For instance, the bodies of the Chan eccentrics are never shown in a straight line, but are always depicted as bent forward, bent backward, or with extended arms, thus making use of the empty space surrounding the figures. A good example is a pair of illustrations of Hanshan and Shide from the Yuan dynasty, kept in the Seikado Bunko in Tokyo and in the Tokiwayama Bunko in Kamakura respectively (Fig. 7). The outlines of the eccentrics' bodies are drawn using fine, linear brushwork, while the monks' hair consists of blotches of ink. Both monks bend forward grinning into empty space. Hanshan holds a brush in his extended right arm, and Shide holds an opened scroll. While the figural inclination of the two monks is subtle, its compositional effect is enormous: the artist's skilful use of space enhances the viewer's sensitivity towards the personalities of the two monks. The monks are not simply surrounded by empty space; they incorporate this space through the subtle yet definite curvature of their bodies.

By consistently employing the compositional characteristic of inclined figures, paintings of Chan eccentrics employ diagonals, lines that cover the maximum surface area of a painting. Additionally, the diagonal can sometimes be seen more clearly in the design of objects that the monks are holding. For example, a painting of Budai at the Idemitsu Museum of Arts in Tokyo shows a pot-bellied monk carrying a huge bag on a long stick that traces the whole diagonal of the painted surface in a single line (Fig. 8). A Hanshan in the Mokichi Okada Association Museum (MOA), in Atami,

Shizuoka, similarly shows the eccentric with a diagonally opened scroll in his hands.[130]

Most intriguingly, several examples actually position the bodies of the monks themselves diagonally. A Yuan dynasty illustration, now kept in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Köln, shows Hanshan pointing with his left arm to the upper right hand corner of the painting, while the sleeve of his right arm is directed towards the lower left hand corner, the combination of both arms describing a perfect diagonal.[131]

Through figural inclination, Chan eccentric monks encompass the space surrounding them in the paintings, thereby standing out in the viewer's eye. This contrasts sharply with the way space is used in the Nanjing portraits of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove introduced above. As Laing points out, the Nanjing portraits use trees to allocate individual space to each of the seven sages. This spatial isolation serves to give the sages individual attention and to allow them to convey their unique personalities. The eccentrics, it seems, do not need to be allowed space, but actively absorb space themselves through bodily postures, moving limbs and facial expression.

The eccentrics' absorption of space becomes even clearer when we compare another, more delicate use of the diagonal in paintings of eccentrics with other categories of paintings. Paintings of Chan eccentrics illustrate the monks from the front, in profile, in a three-quarter view and even, as discussed above for the Masaki image, from the back. One of the most intriguing positions however, is that of the monk turning around and looking back. A good example of this type of image is a Budai from the Song dynasty in the Hatakeyama Memorial Museum in Tokyo (Fig. 9). Painted with ink on paper, this depiction shows Budai bare-chested and pot-bellied, looking back over his right shoulder. Budai's face is expressive, and his mouth is opened in a grin. While the monk's body faces the right side of the painting, his head is turned towards the lower left side of the image. As in the Masaki image described at the beginning of this chapter, this contrast suggests arrested movement. However, it is also a skilful utilization of the diagonal, be it in a more refined way: the viewer is forced to follow Budai's gaze to the lower left-hand corner of the painting, where we

[130] See a reproduction in Suzuki 1983: JM28-004 and Tochigi Prefectural Museum 1994: 110 fig. 2.
[131] See a reproduction in Suzuki 1983: E18-048.

discern an object that can be identified as Budai's bag.[132] Budai's right finger also points towards the bag, directing the viewer's gaze. The bag, in turn, forms a diagonal and a contrast with the stick pointed towards the upper right of the painting, held in Budai's left hand.

In the history of Chinese art the compositional characteristic of people looking back is well-known and often used. In the scene of Gu Kaizhi's *The Admonitions of the Court Instructress* mentioned above, the emperor rejects the court lady by looking back at her over his left shoulder. Similarly, in a detail of *Five Horses* (*Wuma tu* 五馬圖), a painting by the famous Song dynasty artist and art critic Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049-c. 1105), we see a horseman looking back at his horse, over his right shoulder (Fig. 10).[133] One of the most famous art objects of the Five Dynasties, the painted handscroll *Night Revels of Han Xizai* by Gu Hongzhong, according to what is probably a Ming copy, ends significantly with a tiny figure looking back towards the beginning of the scroll. The technique is repeated almost endlessly in the work of later artists.[134]

While in all of the examples mentioned above figures look back, either over their shoulder or simply by turning around entirely, we rarely find figures explicitly reaching back to an object, person or even to the emptiness behind them, or moving away from it. In Gu Kaizhi's *Admonitions*, in accordance with the message of the illustrated scene, the emperor moves away from the court lady. Still, the emperor is only lightly leaning to the left, and his movement is never as pronounced as that of the Hatakeyama Budai. In Li Gonglin's illustration, horse and horseman are of an equal size. As a result, the spatial effect of the horseman looking back is moderated: the line from his eyes to the object of his interest is straight, not diagonal. Finally, the figure of the attendant looking back in *Night Revels of Han Xizai*, evokes mild curiosity, not intense engagement. The attendant is not running towards the party in front of him, but, on the contrary, seems hesitant about his next move. The facial expressions of the emperor, the horseman and the attendant are similarly placid. They are mild and evocative, rather than passionate and telling.

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[132] This identification was kindly suggested to me by the curator of the Hatakeyama Memorial Museum.
[133] Reproduced in Barnhart 1972: fig. 8. Barnhart mentions the painting is now reportedly destroyed.
[134] See for example Wen Zhengming's 文徵明(1470-1559) *Lady and Mistress of the Xiang River* (*Sanxiang tu* 三湘圖), dated 1517, in Barnhart 1972: fig. 19.

Compared to the above examples, the Hatakeyama Budai is a statement of movement in space. The sheer volume of the upper part of Budai's body dominates the right half of the image, while his gaze and expressive face compel the viewer to consider the left part of the painting as well.

*Vitality*

It is clear that paintings of Chan eccentrics share unique visual qualities. These paintings were made by many different artists working in often widely distinct styles, but they share a common tendency to experiment with issues of movement and space on a two-dimensional surface. The artists came up with original solutions for these issues, creating vibrant images. Paintings of Chan eccentrics are permeated with a sense of liveliness and even humor. We notice this most immediately from the monks' expressive faces. In all paintings, the artists seem to have paid special attention to the eccentrics' faces, which are almost always knotted in grins and smiles. The monks' eyes are either narrowed or opened wide.

Grins and smiles do not unambiguously denote humour. Yet when we compare extant Chinese paintings of Chan eccentrics with Japanese examples of the same theme, we are struck by a difference in the overall moods of the paintings. For instance, the Kyoto National Museum holds a pair of paintings of Hanshan and Shide by the Japanese artist Soga Shōhaku 會我蕭白 (1730-1781). Here, the two friends are shown grinning, too, but their grins are of a very different nature. The monks have extraordinary long fingernails and toenails and are placed against a dark background crowded with trees and plants with long branches and leaves. The monks' general appearance is fearful, even demonic. The painting by Soga stands in sharp contrast with every single Chinese example, where the air is spirited to even positively sparkling. Soga's painting is of a comparatively late date. Earlier Japanese examples often convey a lighter mood. This appears, for instance, in the painting *Kanzan and Jittoku* by Shūbun 周文 (act. second quarter of the 15th century). Still, the sense of movement, use of space and facial expression of the monks in Japanese works is never as consistently experimental as in their Chinese counterparts.

Additionally, humour abounds in the Chinese examples through the artists' focus on the postures of the monks. First, there are several examples of monks shown

from the back. For instance, in a painting of Hanshan and Shide by the painter Ma Lin 馬麟 (c. 1180-after 1256), Shide has completely turned away from the viewer, dragging his broom behind him (Fig. 11).

Ma Lin's Shide resembles a rubbing from an incised stone tablet of Hou Chu, one of the disciples of Confucius (Fig. 12).[135] Julia Murray discusses this rubbing in an article on a series of portraits of the 72 disciples of Confucius, made in the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279). As part of this series, the portrait of Hou Chu was installed in the Imperial University in the capital Lin'an, in 1157. Originally only an addendum to the Emperor Gaozong's 高宗 (r. 1127-1162) eulogies to Confucius and his disciples, the portraits soon became more popular than the emperor's writings.

The portrait of Hou Chu shows him from the back. Hou Chu is carrying a scepter on his back, tied to his waistband. Hou Chu has lightly lifted his right arm, while his left arm is bent towards the viewer, with fingers cautiously appearing from his sleeve. Murray convincingly ananlyzes the Hangzhou portraits as uniquely "animated and engaged" in a tradition of didactic portraiture that prioritizes "solemn and impersonal effigies embodying an idealized Confucian personality". She observes that:

> . . .the artist who designed the set was not rigidly constrained by conventions. . .he supplemented the standard three-quarter pose with many other kinds, even an occasional full-face and back presentation.[136]

Apparently, the life and movement found in the Hangzhou portraits is exceptional, and the back presentation of Hou Chu is one of its important characteristics.

In contrast, it is not at all surprising to find such a rendering of the human form in paintings of eccentrics. Back presentation is only one of a variety of often hilarious postures in this category of art. Notably, Chan eccentrics have been illustrated frequently in impossible postures. For example, the Fujita Museum in Osaka holds an illustration of Hanshan and Shide by Liang Kai in which Shide is reading a scroll in almost upside-down position.[137] Shide holds a scroll with arms opened in a V-shape, and is leaning backwards dangerously: we see the form of his face in reverse, starting from the chin down to the eyes.

[135] Murray 1992: fig. 7. The incised tablet is now kept at the Temple of Confucius in Hangzhou.
[136] Murray 1992: 18.
[137] See a reproduction in Suzuki 1983: JM 14-003.

Finally, even a fairly normal representation of an eccentric with no apparent unusual characteristic of facial features or bodily posture can be delightful. *Hanshan Reading a Scroll* by Luochuang 蘿窗 (act. late Song dynasty) in the University Art Museum of the University of California, shows the recluse concentrating on an opened scroll (Fig. 13). The heaviness of the lower part of his body contrasts with his slender arms and elongated fingers that pinch the scroll gently. The scroll covers the lower part of his face, so we cannot see his mouth. However, the look in his eyes alone is sufficient to transmit charm.

Through novel interpretations of movement and space, and through a consistent display of liveliness and humour, paintings of Chan eccentrics stand out as a singular category in the history of Chinese art.

## PAINTINGS OF CHAN ECCENTRICS: GROUPINGS

The corpus of Chan eccentric painting from the Song and Yuan dynasties displays consistency in its visual characteristics. Simultaneously, however, we can distinguish major differences in the visualities of different examples within the corpus. Most importantly, style, form and format vary from case to case, with significant aesthetic effect.

Uniform visual characteristics and varied visualities within the same body of images may at first seem incompatible. Nonetheless, differences within the corpus here only serve to enhance the strength of its thematic unity: all illustrations of the corpus display the same general tendency of pursuing issues of movement and space.

Chapters three and four of this study will elaborate on the sociological effects of different styles, forms and formats of Chan eccentric painting in Song and Yuan society. These chapters will discuss the artistic variety of the corpus in relation to histories of production and reception. The present chapter's focus is on visuality and aesthetics. Below, I propose a number of groupings to be distinguished within the corpus, and I elaborate on the visual and aesthetic effects of these groupings.

Based on issues of style and format, we can divide the corpus using six parameters. The parameters serve as general indications only. Therefore, groupings within the corpus are never mutually exclusive.

The six parameters are:

A. Use of colour or ink
B. Size
C. Format
D. Paired works and single works
E. Use of writing
F. Contributing artists

*A. Use of colour or ink*

The majority of the surviving examples of paintings of Chan eccentrics are done in black ink. These paintings are never monotonous, but use different shades of black and grey to accentuate different elements on the painted surface. Additionally, many artists reveal a true mastery of brushwork. For example, the painter of the Hatakeyama Budai discussed above used a variety of techniques to create his eccentric monk. The artist used fine, sharp lines for facial details, while he designed Budai's body in a faint, light grey outline, and added patches of ink to highlight Budai's chest, belly and feet.

We can understand, even without seeing actual images, that there is an obvious difference between paintings done only in black ink and paintings done in ink and colour. However, when we see actual examples of both types next to each other, the surprising visual effect of the latter becomes clear. One of the best-known illustrations of the Chan eccentrics may serve as an example. This illustration consists of a pair of scrolls of Hanshan and Shide by Yan Hui 顏輝 (second half of the 13th century), presently in the Tokyo National Museum (Fig. 14). The artist made ample use of a bright red for the monks' tongues and mouths. He also used red to add colour to their faces. The monks' nails are done in white, while their robes are painted in hues of dark green and brown. Hanshan and Shide bend towards the viewer against an empty background. Both are laughing with wide open mouths that reveal rows of white teeth.

The complete emptiness surrounding the monks, their figural inclinations and their expressive faces are sufficient to draw the viewer's attention to them. However,

the addition of colour adds another dimension to this: the viewer is struck by surprise, even shock, as the monks seem to suddenly pop out of nowhere.

*B. Size*

The shock effect of Yan Hui's *Hanshan and Shide* is increased by another aspect of its visuality: its large size. Each of the two scrolls measures 127 by 41.8 centimeters. The scrolls are hanging scrolls. They are kept rolled up in boxes and need to be unrolled and hung up for each viewing session to ensure proper viewing. Additionally, the paintings need to be viewed from a proper distance. In the case of such large paintings, a proper distance would be at least three meters. From a viewing distance of approximately three to four meters, the monks appear lifesize, and the illustrations become very lifelike. Other large, coloured paintings have similar effects. For instance, the Kyoto National Museum holds a pair of Ming dynasty scrolls of Hanshan and Shide, accompanied by two Daoist Immortals (Fig. 15). The paintings combine strong, contrasting colours and human-size renderings of the four deities to create a sense of real, physical presence in the viewer.

The above-mentioned examples strongly contrast with smaller paintings in black ink or in ink and colour. These smaller paintings may vary in size, from approximately 30 by 40 centimeters to 70 by 50 centimeters. While smaller colour illustrations retain a surprise effect, the shorter viewing distance makes these paintings less overwhelming.

The contrast between large and coloured illustrations and smaller paintings enables us to imagine widely different contexts for these two types of images. For instance, one could think of the large and coloured examples as altar pieces in one of the main halls of a temple complex. Painted on silk, they are also more durable than many of their smaller counterparts done on paper. Thus, the large images would be better able to withstand the effects of larger numbers of viewers and longer periods of viewing. In contrast, smaller images only allow a restricted number of viewers. Furthermore, if these smaller paintings are done on such fragile material as paper, viewing sessions will have to be short in order to protect the image. However, contexts for smaller images need not be concomitantly restricted. While these paintings might have been viewed in comparatively private and short sessions, their

size also makes them portable and therefore adaptable to a wider variety of social settings.

*C. Format*

The issue of the size of a painting is related to the issue of its format: both parameters affect ways in which we display and access imagery. As a hanging scroll, Yan Hui's *Hanshan and Shide* is representative of the method of display and access of most of the paintings of Chan eccentrics extant today. All the paintings that I saw during fieldwork in Japan were preserved and viewed as hanging scrolls: they were kept rolled up in boxes, covered in layers of protective paper. For viewing, the scrolls were hung against a wall at an appropriate height and carefully unrolled, often using a wooden cylinder to prevent the scroll from tearing. However, we should not take contemporary methods of handling and viewing Chan eccentric painting as representative for such methods for all paintings of Chan eccentrics throughout history.

In an informative article, Yoshiaki Shimizu discusses six paintings by the artist Yintuoluo, including a painting of Budai at the Nezu Institute of Fine Arts in Tokyo and the Tokyo National Museum *Hanshan and Shide*.[138] The six paintings by Yintuoluo are now part of different collections in Japan and the United States. Five of the six paintings, including both eccentric paintings, were long considered part of a single handscroll, a format that can be viewed on a table or stand by constantly unrolling and rolling the scroll. While Shimizu does not agree that the five paintings were part of a single handscroll, he does believe that the paintings were meant as handscrolls and not hanging scrolls. Furthermore, Shimizu is convinced that paintings of Chan eccentrics were part of a separate handscroll tradition: the eccentrics were never painted together on the same scroll with Chan patriarchs and Chan masters.

Shimizu discusses textual evidence for early examples of handscrolls depicting series of eccentric monks (*sansheng tu* 散聖圖). He writes that the famous Ming official and connoisseur Li Rihua 李日華 (1565-1635) mentions a handscroll by Fanlong 梵隆, a twelfth-century monk and painter. According to Li, Fanlong's scroll contained a series of ten paintings of different eccentric monks. The paintings were

[138] Shimizu 1980.

accompanied by a series of ten verses that identify each of the characters. Shimizu also notes the discourse record of the Chan monk Xisou Shaotan 希叟紹曇 (act. 1249-1275) which mentions that this monk saw a handscroll with a series of eccentric monks.

These textual records indicate that the handscroll format was popular as a carrier of Chan eccentric painting. The effects of the handscroll format are different from those of the hanging scroll type. First, the number of viewers of a handscroll is even more restricted. Viewing also requires more care, as the scroll needs to be handled constantly. Third, the textual records are of handscrolls with series of eccentric monks. A series of monks indicates different concepts of the eccentrics than concepts that informed the painting of individual monks on hanging scrolls. For instance, in a series of different eccentric monks such as on the Fanlong scroll, Hanshan, Shide and Budai would have been part of an actual group of Chan eccentrics. Also, Shimizu believes that the Nezu painting may have been part of a handscroll representing episodes from Budai's legend, while the Tokyo National Museum painting could come from one showing anecdotes of Hanshan and Shide. Such handscrolls, describing one or two eccentrics only, may have shown the monks in a group or in separate scenes, or they may even have been narratives. The handscroll format thus leads into a wide range of new possibilities.

A third two-dimensional format, represented by a rubbing from the Yuan dynasty and another from the Qing dynasty, is similarly indicative of yet another visuality and way of handling and experiencing eccentric art. The Yuan dynasty rubbing is presently kept in the Museo d'Arte Cinese di Parma. The rubbing is an intriguing illustration of Budai. The monk's gaze is focused on a skull at the bottom right-hand corner of the rubbing. At the top of the rubbing we see a depiction of the Buddha on a cloud rising from Budai's head. The medium of rubbing suggests a facilitation of access: a rubbing can easily be reproduced and distributed innumerable times from the original stone incision. I will return to rubbings and depictions of the monks in stonework in Chapter Four.

*D. Paired works and single works*

Contemporary collections of Chan eccentric painting divide the category of hanging scrolls of paintings of Chan eccentrics into single scrolls, paired scrolls and sets of three hanging scrolls. This division affects methods of display in museums and reproduction in publications. Consequently, it has a major influence on the visual effect and conceptualizations of artworks on contemporary viewers. However, the division is also precarious. It can cause present-day viewers to overlook that combinations of paintings are not necessarily representative of historical pairings, but may be of a much later date.

The majority of paired scrolls of Chan eccentrics are obvious combinations of two closely connected single paintings: they illustrate the two friends Hanshan and Shide. The visuality of such pairs of scrolls differs considerably from the visuality of single hanging scrolls. A comparison between two paintings by Yintuoluo in the Tokyo National Museum may serve as an example. The first is a single hanging scroll illustrating Hanshan and Shide, discussed above. The second painting is also titled *Hanshan and Shide*, but this painting is a set of two separate scrolls (Fig. 16). With regard to the content of the images, the single hanging scroll depicts a single scene in which the monks figure together. The paired scrolls may also illustrate a single moment, but they employ a different use of vision: the effect of the paintings on the viewer becomes explicit only when they are seen together. Furthermore, paired scrolls have a crucial spatial effect that extends beyond the painted surface. When on display together, these scrolls aesthetically affect the physical space of their surroundings in different ways than single scrolls. For instance, they may be shown on both sides of an altar or on two sides of an entrance.

The two scrolls of a set like Yintuoluo's *Hanshan and Shide* are evidently connected. The above-mentioned paintings are by the same artist and contain his seals. Both paintings also contain complementary colophons and seals by a monk called Zijiao.[139] However, in other cases of paintings currently paired together, connections are not so unambiguous. The Tokyo National Museum holds another set of paintings titled *Two Patriarchs Harmonizing Their Minds*. One of the paintings shows Fenggan, dozing with his tiger, while the other shows a monk, probably the second patriarch Huike, resting in a slumber. The paintings are made in the style of Shi Ke 石恪 (d.

[139] Fontein and Hickman 1970: 38-40. Nothing is known about Zijiao.

after 975), but are probably from the thirteenth or fourteenth century. Fontein and Hickman suggest that:

> the two paintings may originally have been part of a handscroll. In the process of being separated and remounted, these sections may have been cut out and reduced in size, while at the same the seals and inscriptions were transposed.[140]

Furthermore, the authors find that the combination of Fenggan, a Chan eccentric, with an orthodox patriarch of the Chan sect is uncommon. They submit that the title of the painting refers to only one of the two illustrations and should be interpreted as "The Second Patriarch Harmonizing His Mind".

Groupings of three scrolls are similarly prone to different interpretations. Most combinations open up several possibilities of visual contexts. For instance, in a set of paintings of Bodhidharma, Fenggan and Budai, the latter two eccentrics appear to have been painted by the same hand.[141] Li Que 李確, a Southern Song painter and follower of Liang Kai, signed the Budai image. The Fenggan image is not signed, but executed in the same distinctive style.[142] Both these paintings contain colophons by Yanqi Guangwen 偃谿廣聞 (1189-1263), abbot to several important Chan temples in the Southern Song period. The Bodhidharma image is likely by a different painter. This painting contains a colophon by Mieweng Wenli 滅翁文禮 (1167?-1250?). According to Fontein and Hickman

> Sections of paper have been attached above and below in order to adjust the height of the [Bodhidharma] painting to the two flanking works, and while there is no evidence to suggest the date when the three paintings were combined into a triptych, the elaborate matched brocade mountings may well go back to the Muromachi period [(1336-1573)][143]

Coincidentally, Mieweng Wenli and Yanqi Guangwen were both abbots at the Jingci temple in present-day Zhejiang province during approximately the same period. Thus, the scrolls with the Yanqi Guangwen colophon may have been added to the Bodhidharma scroll and the three paintings subsequently displayed together. However,

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[140] Fontein and Hickman 1970: 10.

[141] All three paintings are part of the collection of the Myōshinji temple in Kyoto, but are currently kept in the Kyoto National Museum.

[142] Fontein and Hickman 1970: 19.

[143] Fontein and Hickman 1970: 19.

the connection between the paintings may also have been made after their transport to Japan.

Conversely, a triptych by the Japanese painter Moku'an Rei'en 默庵靈淵 (d. 1345) may cast light on Song and Yuan methods of display. This set of paintings is from the Nanbokuchō period (1336-1392). It shows the Linji patriarch flanked by two scrolls, one depicting Hanshan and one Shide.[144] The combination of the three paintings generates an extraordinary visual contrast. The painting of the abbot is formal and still, while the Hanshan and Shide scrolls are expressive and moving.

Both Shimizu and Fontein and Hickman write that it is uncommon to find paintings of Chan eccentrics and paintings of Chan orthodox patriarchs on the same scroll. However, there is no evidence that the separate scrolls of eccentrics and patriarchs could not be shown together. The Moku'an scroll could thus be indicative of an intriguing trend of display that connects visually the artistic and religious extremes of the Chan school.

### *E. Use of Writing*

In Chinese art history, paintings have long functioned as surfaces for colophons, poetry, calligraphy and seals. The addition of these elements to painting influences ways in which we understand its significance. A number of images of Chan eccentrics are pieces of painting only: they do not contain any calligraphy or seal impressions at all. These examples contrast with other images of eccentric monks that display a variety of uses of writing.

A helpful approach to implications of different physical forms of writing in the West is exemplified in Roger Chartier's *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances and Audiences from Codex to Computer*.[145] Chartier's first chapter, "Representations of the written word" shows how the physical form of the written word influences our style of reading, the role of a text and our understanding of the significance of a text. In particular, Chartier discusses the transformation of the written word in Europe from the volumen (the book in the form of a scroll), to the codex (the present-day book that uses both sides of a page), and, finally, the electronic text. This last transformation, Chartier argues, is more powerful than the invention of the printing press, because the

[144] See a reproduction in Suzuki 1983: JT15-022.
[145] Chartier 1995.

invention of moveable type printing did not change the form of the book.

Without, for now, going into the semantic meaning of written texts, Chartier's chapter is helpful for gaining a sense of the implications of the different physical forms of writing associated with Chan eccentric painting, too. Chartier mentions East Asia only briefly. He notes that in East Asia, while the emperor and monasteries dominated the printing press, texts were widely disseminated through xylography, or woodblock rubbings. However, the category of Chan eccentric painting is evidence for several other ways of disseminating texts. Additionally, eccentric painting reveals different styles of reading, and varying roles and significance of the written text.

First, the written word is found on surviving examples of paintings of Chan eccentrics in the form of calligraphy and seal impressions. While most of the calligraphy is by Chan priests and monks, the seal impressions include secular collectors' seals as well. Calligraphy and seals are omnipresent in Chinese painting. However, there is a significant additional dimension to texts on paintings of Chan eccentrics: the Chan establishment collected abbots' calligraphy on paintings of eccentrics in the portrait eulogy section of Chan discourse records.

The collection of "appreciations of portraits of abbots and paintings of the Buddha and the patriarchs" is the second physical form of writing associated with Chan eccentric painting. The collection indicates a transformation of the written word found on the painted surface: by adding the written word to the published canon, it confers explicit religious meaning to the text, and, therefore, to the painting. This transformation may not necessarily have followed the application of the text to the painting; it may have occurred simultaneously. Of major import is the fact that there is a connection between these two types of writing. This implies that neither the paintings of Chan eccentrics nor the collections of calligraphy in Chan sources can ever be read in isolation.

The association of Chan eccentric painting with texts that have religious meaning is significant for our understanding of one aspect of the valuation of the paintings. If we consider the comments of abbots on the paintings collected in the canon in the context of the Buddhist tradition of the veneration and incantation of texts, our understanding of the paintings becomes highly specific, too. I return to this point in section three of this chapter, and again in Chapter Three.

A third form of writing on Chan eccentric painting consists of secondary source material. This may include references in traditional Chinese textual sources,

but survives explicitly in the form of traditional Japanese records attached to paintings presently in Japanese collections. Two examples from the MOA indicate how these writings influence our style of reading. The first image is a painting of *Hanshan and Shide* by Liang Kai. This painting is presently kept in an exquisite box. The lid of the box contains the text ‘A painting of Hanshan and Shide by Liang Kai’. The textual records appended to the painting in the box mention that the painting was in the possession of the seventh Ashikaga shōgun (Fig.17). The second example is a set of two scrolls showing Fenggan, Hanshan and Shide. There are three records attached to this set, one by a connoisseur, and two by two members of the famous Kanō school of painting of Tokugawa Japan (1603-1868). The Kanō school members repeatedly confirm that this painting is by Liang Kai. This is a surprising connection, as the style of the *Fenggan, Hanshan and Shide* is different from all other surviving paintings of this theme attributed to Liang Kai. In fact, the repeated claim of the Kanō school members paradoxically highlights the uncertainty of this attribution. It also raises questions about the value of the painting for its collector. It is uncertain whether the scrolls were favored for their subject matter, or because of their association with a painter or a calligrapher.

In both MOA examples, the written texts function as subtle pointers. Encountering them on the box and in the appended material, the viewer’s understanding of the painting is delicately but compellingly directed into a particular mode. This method of direction is immediate and tangible: at each viewing session, the viewer is confronted with the written comments. Thus, the viewer faces a situation very different from one in which comments on a painting are separate from the actual image and can be consulted independently.

Finally, a very subtle but intriguing use of the written word in portraits of Chan eccentrics can be found in paintings showing the monks reading scrolls and writing texts (Fig.13). To my knowledge, paintings of reading and writing are not common in Chinese art. One of the few types of painting that covers these activities is paintings of gatherings of scholars (Fig.22). Popular in the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties, these paintings depicted groups of well-known, learned men, engaged in elegant activities including appreciating art objects and music, painting, reading and writing calligraphy. Arguably, in Chan eccentric painting, reading and writing have a different connotation. I return to this point in section three of this chapter.

Notably, writing functions in Chan eccentric painting not only on the meta-

level of different physical forms, but as a text with referential meaning as well. The different types of writing discussed above inform different reception histories of the paintings. Chapters Three and Five, on painters and viewers, will focus on these histories in detail.

*F. Contributing artists*

Considering the time frame of the Song and Yuan dynasties, it is no exaggeration to say that Chan eccentric painting as an artistic theme attracted the attention of an exceptional variety of artists. Different examples of this category reveal the hands and styles of different painters. Chapter Three will investigate the background of these painters in detail. For now, most intriguing is the fact that artists seem to have adapted their methods of expression when working on paintings of Chan eccentrics as distinct from other subject matters. This indicates an awareness of a distinct subject matter and artistic theme.

For instance, we may compare a detail of the painting *Five Horses* by Li Gonglin, discussed briefly above, to a painting of the sleeping Budai by the same artist (Fig.18). Both share a similarity in the brushwork technique used for the robes of Budai and the horseman leading one of the horses, but in all other aspects, they are very different. The Budai illustration, again, shows signs of novel interpretations of movement and space. The eccentric monk is shown seated, bending forward slightly with his head on his chest. Budai is leaning on his bag, which is attached to a stick. This stick covers the lower left-hand corner of the painting diagonally. Budai's voluminous body covers a major part of the lower half of the painting, and its softness stands in contrast with the sharper lines of the horse in *Five Horses*. Budai is, in fact, almost swaying.

Similarly, Liang Kai, an artist famous for his renderings of Buddhist subjects, seems to adopt a different mode of expression for his eccentric paintings. Comparing two of his most famous paintings in the Tokyo National Museum, *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* and *Sakyamuni Returning from the Mountains* to a *Hanshan and Shide* now in the MOA, this difference becomes clear instantly. The former two paintings represent two different sides of the same artist. The *Sakyamuni* is painted in the so-called academic manner; a painting style employed by artists working for the Song Imperial Academy. The academic manner is a detailed method of painting, and

contrasts with Liang Kai's illustration of the sixth patriarch: this painting, representative of his later work, is done in a cursive manner using powerful, short strokes. However, the MOA *Hanshan and Shide* is evidently of yet another expressive mode. Compared to *The Sixth Patriarch*, this painting displays a softened use of the cursive manner that is directed towards underlining the volume of the two illustrated figures. Hanshan and Shide appear light and ethereal, and are moving about the painted surface almost airily. The artist's treatment of the MOA image is representative of his treatment of all surviving paintings of this theme.

Li Gonglin and Liang Kai are two of a long list of different artists whose names are connected to Chan eccentric painting. In traditional Chinese sources and contemporary Western reception histories of Chinese art, many of these artists function as representative of widely different traditions of painting. For instance, Li Gonglin is best known for his association with the famous late eleventh-century circle of writers and artists centered around the statesman and poet Su Shi 蘇軾(1037-1101). This circle of friends first formulated what is now known as the literati theory of art. This theory considers the formal elements of writing and painting as superior to its subject matter, and it believes that formal elements describe the character of an artist. Liang Kai, a student of the painter Jia Shigu 賈師古(act. c.1130-1160), who in turn studied with Li Gonglin, is never associated with literati painting. Liang was a member of the Song Imperial Academy of Painting. After winning a golden belt for his talent, he left the Academy and went to live in Chan monasteries in the Hangzhou area.

Similarly, Guanxiu 貫休(832-912), the painter associated with a Budai now in a private Japanese collection, is from a different milieu than Ma Lin, the painter of the *Hanshan and Shide* in a private collection discussed above. Fontein and Hickman describe the monk Guanxiu as "the first great artist who emerged from the Chan milieu".[146] The authors even suggest that he stands at the "birth of Chan art".[147] They write that Guanxiu's painting style in ink-monochrome was unorthodox. Additionally they find that Guanxiu's behaviour as a traveling poet, calligrapher and painter "typifies the attitude and way of life characteristic of many later Chan artists". On the

[146] Fontein and Hickman 1970: xix.
[147] Fontein and Hickman 1970: xix. I believe the term "Chan art" to be much more varied and diffuse than Fontein and Hickman's definition suggests; see also section three of this chapter, and Chapter Three.

contrary, Ma Lin belonged to the illustrious Ma family of painters. Five members of this family all worked for the Song Imperial Academy. Compared to Guanxiu, Ma Lin's connections with the Chan establishment are not so transparent.

In addition to work signed by or attributed to famous and less famous artists, paintings of Chan eccentrics also include numerous examples by anonymous painters. For instance, the painter of the paired Hanshan and Shide scrolls presently held in the Seikado Bunko and the Tokiwayama Bunko discussed above still needs to be identified.

The variety of painters pursuing the same theme of the Chan eccentrics indicates that while there is a category of Chan eccentric painting, it is impossible to define the Chan eccentric *painter*. Fontein and Hickman discuss connections between Chan monks and literati in the Song and Yuan dynasties. They argue that there are parallels between the work of "Chan painters", such as Guanxiu, and literati art. At times they find these parallels so strong that they question the existence of the category "Chan painting" itself, wondering whether "Chan painting" is perhaps another type of literati art. However, most painters of Chan eccentrics, including the painters discussed above, cannot unambiguously be classified under the category "Chan painter" or "literati artist".

There are alternatives to Fontein and Hickman's division into twin classes. For instance, the tension between a number of individual artists, each bringing their own distinctive background and training to the field of Chan eccentric painting, seems a rewarding topic to explore. This will be the subject of Chapter Three.

## 2. ISSUES OF IDENTITY: FROM LIKENESS TO PRESENCE

One of the primary sources for understanding portraits of Chan eccentrics consists of Chan monks' commentaries on portraits. These textual references for paintings of Chan eccentrics and the consistency in manner of their visual rendering from the Song period onwards suggest that these paintings need to be regarded as a group and as a recurring artistic theme. However, Western and Chinese scholarship of the twentieth century rarely consider paintings of Chan eccentrics as a visual category. Studies are few and far between, and most discussions are limited to brief analyses of individual

images in exhibition catalogues.[148] In his article “Six Narrative Paintings by Yin T’o-lo: Their Symbolic Content”, Yoshiaki Shimizu proposes looking at paintings of eccentrics as a group.[149] Shimizu discusses Yuan and Ming texts that refer to handscrolls with illustrations of “wandering saints”. The texts mention paintings of Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan as part of these handscrolls, indicating that there was a thematic tradition connecting paintings of eccentrics. However, Shimizu’s main argument is still on different types of paintings by the Yuan dynasty artist Yintuoluo, and not on a category of paintings across the oeuvres of various artists.

Studies of Chan art have long prioritized the discussion of portraits of historical Chan abbots.[150] Such portraits have been studied as certificates of transmission and, more recently, as part of funerary rites. The most important reason for this prioritization seems to stem from a Western and Western-inspired art-historical fascination for historicity and likeness in figural art. This fascination has led to the exclusion of illustrations of Chan eccentrics from discussions of portraiture, or, for that matter, any particular genre of painting. Coincidentally, traditional Chinese art-historical texts do not seem to connect or discuss paintings of Chan eccentrics as a corpus either. However, this is a consequence of very different priorities.

In the present section I will introduce debates on priorities in Western and Chinese art-historical discourse on portraiture. The study of art history across cultures is a difficult subject, and I concur with several authors of recent studies of “non-Western” portraiture that we should frame our research from different localities and positions.

The investigation of portraits of Chan eccentric monks touches upon fundamental issues in art history, and I will next discuss portraits as likenesses, as representations and as signs. In the context of Chinese Buddhist portraiture, it is impossible to understand Chan eccentric portraits without considering issues of likeness and the self within the Buddhist tradition. The third section of this chapter introduces these issues through commentaries of Chan monks on likenesses, portraits and art. I interpret the commentaries as questions, rather than pronounced judgments, and show how they direct viewers towards contemplating concepts of presence suggested by the portrait image.

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[148] See for instance Fontein and Hickman 1970.
[149] Shimizu 1980.
[150] Brinker 1973 and Brinker and Kanazawa 1996 and Foulk and Sharf 1993-1994.

## PROBLEMS OF LIKENESS IN CHINESE PORTRAITURE

According to Dietrich Seckel, one of the major scholars of East Asian portraiture, portraiture is “physiognomic likeness based on the direct observation of a living person”.[151] Seckel describes the history of portraiture in China in *The Rise of Portraiture in Chinese Art*.[152] He believes that portraiture in China is the result of a long process of development towards physiognomic likeness. This process has four successive stages: “humanization”, “individualization”, “personalization” and, finally, “full portraiture”. In each stage, Seckel writes, figural art in China reached a higher degree of realism, as images gradually conformed to a person’s exact physical features. Portraiture attained maturity in the Tang dynasty, when artists’ increased physiognomical interest stimulated the creation of “real portraits in great numbers”.

The method Seckel employs to look at portraiture in China reminds us strongly of familiar, Western art-historical methodologies. Seckel defines the quality of portraits in China based on a Western understanding of realism in art.[153] Following traditional historians of Western art, he assumes that the degree of physical likeness in a portrait equals a portrait’s achieved level of perfection. Moreover, the title of his article and its content suggest that it took a long time before “portraiture” could manifest itself in China. Since Seckel believes Tang portraits to be most “realistic”, he characterizes all earlier depictions of persons as either “archaic images” or “character figures that are deceptively realistic without presenting true likenesses”.[154]

Seckel’s attention to exact likeness in portraiture results in a tenuous analysis of portrait images in China. For instance, there is no convincing argument that “less personalized images” were not meant to portray individuals. Also, Seckel differentiates between “character portraits”, or images of persons that do not show their exact physical features, “imaginary portraits”, or portraits of persons whose historicity and exact physical features are unclear, and “real portraits”. Yet, there is no reason to assume that viewers in China made such distinctions or that these three

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[151] Seckel 1993 and Seckel 1997-1999.
[152] Seckel 1993.
[153] Contemporary art-historical discourse questions Western concepts of realism in portraiture, see the section *Mimesis, representation and sign* below.
[154] Seckel’s views are not exceptional in the field of Chinese art history. For instance, Sherman Lee writes: “the true far eastern portrait is rare, and even then it is the observed aspect of an individual”. See Lee

types of portraits did not convey a similar sense of physical presence in a Chinese viewer's mind.[155]

Additionally, Seckel writes that a picture is a "real portrait" only when it is made to conform to a person's features. He argues that this definition may be found in one of the earliest and famous traditional texts on Chinese art, the *Classification of Painters* (*Guhua pinlu* 古畫品錄) by Xie He 謝赫 (act. c. 500-535?). In the best-known passage of this text, Xie He lists the so-called "Six Laws of Painting" (*liufa* 六法). The six laws are six principles of painting, and they remain essential to all later Chinese art-historical texts.[156]

The third of the six laws reads: "Correspondence to the Object which means the depicting of forms".[157] This law obviously indicates some form of likeness. However, whether or not it indicates exact physiognomic likeness is open to debate. Xie He himself wrote of the artists Zhang Mo 張墨 (3rd century) and Xun Xu 荀勖 (c. 218-c. 289), whom he placed in the first class:

> If one stresses their manner of rendering objects, then one will not see this pure essence in their work. But, if one considers them from a point of view beyond the forms, only then will one be satisfied with their richness.[158]

Traditional art historians always graded excellent portraits based on the portrait's ability to capture the spirit of the sitter, rather than their physical features.

Towards the end of *The Rise of Portraiture in Chinese Art*, Seckel's argument becomes difficult to sustain. He divides the "realism" of portraits of the Tang into "exotic, normal and moderate realistic styles", as he finds that the "full portraits" of the Tang are nonetheless still subject to decorum and can never be true likenesses. Still, Seckel continues in a similar methodology in his later, extensive publication on portraiture in East Asia. In *The Portrait in East Asia* (*Das Porträt in Ostasien*), he divides portraiture into such categories as "ideal portraits" and "traditional portraits", based, again, on similitude and historicity.[159] Notably, the eccentrics do not feature in any of these categories.

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[155] Seckel's terminology here is also problematic. For instance, the term "real portrait" implicates the existence of an "unreal portrait"; an ambiguous and undefined concept.
[156] I will elaborate on the Six Laws in the next section.
[157] Bush and Shih 1985: 40.
[158] Bush and Shih 1985: 30.
[159] Seckel 1997-1999.

Seckel's approach to portraiture in China exemplifies what are arguably misreadings in transcultural studies. For portraiture, two other examples of confrontations between Western and "non-Western" art histories show, again, that the prioritization of likeness as we understand it in Western art history is hardly a given truth. Rather, the issue of identity and accurate likeness can itself be subjected to different sets of values. In the first example, Joanna Woodall discusses two facial portraits of a Maori chief.[160] The first portrait, painted by a Western portraitist, is proposed as an exact likeness of the chief's facial features. The second portrait, painted by the chief himself, is an illustration of nothing but the chief's tattoos. Richard Brilliant provides another fine example in *Portraiture*.[161] He discusses ethnographic portraits of African-Americans in the United States in the nineteenth century. Western viewers termed these portraits exact likenesses, while the people represented could not recognize themselves in the paintings.

*Art history across cultures: prioritizations*

Woodall and Brilliant's examples serve to indicate a major problem in art history: the study of the art of "non-Western" cultures. There is a tendency in Western art history to subject the art of "non-Western" cultures to Western methodologies and priorities.

In *Art in China*, Craig Clunas elaborates on what this means for China and "Chinese art".[162] He believes "Chinese art" is a recent, Western invention that indicates an art world different from, or even opposed to, the generally unqualified tradition of art in the West. Simultaneously, it points towards unity across types of objects and fields of practice within China. While such assumptions may facilitate an understanding of art outside familiar, Western contexts, they only describe an aspect of art in China, and do not encompass its full potential.

Ikem Stanley Okoye elaborates on the general problem of a history of art of "non-Western" cultures in *Tribe and Art History*.[163] Okoye discusses a representation of the deity Anyanwu from Oka, a village in southeastern Nigeria. This deity is

[160] Woodall 1997.
[161] Brilliant 1991.
[162] Clunas 1997.
[163] Okoye 1996.

represented through an installation made of bottles of Schnapps, an imported Dutch gin.[164] The installation was photographed in 1912, and, as Okoye writes

> predates the many traditional wood-sculpted figures that populate the African sections of art museums and galleries in the United States and the European Community.[165]

Yet, Okoye knows of no exhibition of early twentieth-century African art that includes an object of this type. The main reason for this is that an object such as the Anyanwu installation does not fit into the Western conceptualization of African art. According to Okoye, in the field of art history:

> . . .the historical periodicity of Europe and European-centered things is normalized and allowed to claim for definitional space in practice, while arenas that focus on other material occupy only a synchronous space apportioned according to other rules. . .Inadvertently perhaps, this other material is thus assumed to be less differentiated, less historicizable, and therefore less definitional for art *history*.[166]

The Anyanwu installation can be read in multiple ways. The object is a commentary on colonial power, and on the power of industrial production. Simultaneously, the fact that the Anyanwu artist used Schnapps bottles of a colonial power to represent an indigenous deity shows that the colonialists "were not any more crucial to this power's multiplication than were its local consumers". Thus, the Anyanwu installation is a complex object that indicates a radical transformation of earlier representational practices. The installation can easily function as an example of an artistic practice that, were it a Western object, historians of Western art would call modern or postmodern. Yet, this is not how the Anyanwu deity is understood. In fact, art history does not even attempt to understand this representation. A "modernist" African object, created at a time when modernism had only just begun to influence European artistic practices, is impossible to enfold into Western art history's concept of non-Western art.

Okoye convincingly shows that anthropology can offer a solution for this problem in art history:

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[164] While this is not part of Okoye's main argument, it is interesting in the context of portraiture and likeness that Okoye writes that ". . .most African peoples do not represent deities as such; the sculpture is therefore not an attempt to produce a likeness of this god. It would be more accurate to think of it as an attempt to represent the god's qualities or persona." This corresponds with my definition of portraiture under *Mimesis, representation and sign* below.

[165] Okoye 1996: 614.

[166] Okoye 1996: 612.

> The anthropology of aesthetics questions the universality of aesthetic categories and standards, interrogating the constancy of the location of the object within the construction of a locally valorized aesthetic world.[167]

Similarly, Okoye writes, it is crucial that Western art-historical discourse open up to objects and aesthetics of other cultures through a proper understanding of the various cultural milieus of production. Framing art history simultaneously from a multiplicity of positions and locations can enable different dialogues and stimulate constructive progress of the art-historical field.[168]

Several recent studies of art and portraiture in Asia indeed follow the objective of framing research from a multiplicity of positions, with fruitful results. In *The Very Idea of a Portrait*, Vidya Dehejia discusses portraits of royalty and saints in south India.[169] Verisimilitude is not the ruling principle in these portraits. Most sculptures are idealized and resemble images of gods rather than humans. Recognition of the individual represented through an idealized image works using different mechanisms. For instance, viewers might have recognized a sculpture of a queen, carved as a goddess, through the particular rituals that would have been performed in front of it. Dehejia sees no objection in calling idealized images portraits, and she provides an explanation for the Indian artist's indifference to verisimilitude:

> Portraits have always existed in India, though the nomenclature may be misleading to the modern reader because these stone, metal, or painted portraits paid little attention to physical resemblance. . . .We may perhaps attempt a working hypothesis to explain the indifference to verisimilitude in so much of Indian portraiture. In the context of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain India, it may be necessary to reexamine, even redefine, the philosophic context of the individual self. . . .[These] beliefs envision a disembodied entity, a soul that returns repeatedly to earth, each time temporarily assuming a body with particular physical characteristics, only to discard it and assume a totally different body the next time around. . . .Perhaps it is not so strange, after all, that the reproduction of physiognomic likeness held little significance in a society which believed that the physical features of the present birth would be replaced by a new set of bodily features in the next birth and that the ultimate state of salvation is the self unencumbered by a body.[170]

[167] Okoye 1996: 612.
[168] Additionally, framing art history from multiple positions would force different alignments of the scholarly community. Under such circumstances, a twelfth-century Africanist might be more likely to be in dialogue with a medievalist than with a scholar of Inuit art.
[169] Dehejia 1998.
[170] Dehejia 1998: 47.

Proceeding from beliefs and practices specific to a particular locality, Dehejia describes alternative ways of thinking about art, representation and portraiture, opening up the art-historical field.

Julia Murray also frames her research from multiple, rather than single positions. In her article on the Hangzhou rubbings of Confucius and his disciples, Murray translates the title of this series, *sheng xian tu* 聖賢圖, as 'Portraits of Confucius and his Disciples'.[171] Murray's translation of the Chinese term *tu* 圖 as *portrait*, rather than just *illustration*, is convincing, since the portraits of Confucius and his disciples served as representative of the sage and his students, and functioned as necessary complements to Emperor Gaozong's written eulogies. The portraits are hardly exact likenesses, but to viewers, especially in the context of a location like the Imperial University, they communicated a sense of real, physical presence. Viewers never doubted the historicity of Confucius and his disciples; the very question of historicity might never have arisen at all. Murray proceeds to discuss how values attached to the Song dynasty steles change over time, revealing contested understandings of the same material, within what Western art-historical discourse would consider the same aesthetic and cultural world.

Finally, Audrey Spiro's recent work on the Nanjing portraits of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove is also significant of a new approach to portraiture in China.[172] Spiro acknowledges that portraiture's primary value is to be particularistic, but she observes that "aesthetic and social functions may subvert that unique phenomenon". Spiro advances the definition that portraits are first and foremost "intended to be like someone" and proceeds to explore the intentions of the patrons of the Nanjing portraits, and the effects that the portraits might have had on their viewers.

The following pages frame portraits of Chan eccentrics from multiple positions. They examine how portraits function in Chinese art-historical writings and in contemporary Western art-historical discourse.

### ART AND PORTRAITURE IN CHINA

With regard to art-historical writing in China, the period covered by the subject of this study is fascinating. Song and Yuan dynasty art-historical texts are numerous, and

[171] Murray 1992.
[172] Spiro 1990. The Nanjing portraits have been discussed above.

they constantly organize and reorganize definitions and values for "art", "the artist", and "excellent" painters, calligraphers, and artistic themes. A majority of Song dynasty classification texts emphasize the social status of the artist. Such prioritization does not leave room for in-depth discussion of particular, interconnected subject matters or artistic themes, such as portraits of Chan eccentrics. However, Song and Yuan texts invariably agree with two points formulated at the beginning of art-historical writing in China. First, the texts concur that the primary purpose of art is to convey spirit, rather than likeness. Secondly, the texts agree that figure painting is one of the most difficult subjects in art.

In Chapter Three, I will elaborate on Song and Yuan considerations of different painters and styles in painting, in order to understand backgrounds for painters of Chan eccentrics. Below, I present a summary of influential views on art and portraiture, in pre-Tang, Tang, Song, and Yuan times. The section quotes from excerpts collected in Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih's classic anthology *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*.[173] Most of these views are well known. However, I reiterate them here since discussions of values for art and portraiture in traditional Chinese art-historical writing are an important window through which to evaluate Chan portrait painting in medieval and early modern China.

### *The six laws of painting and capturing personality in early figural art*

Without doubt the most important figure in Chinese art history prior to the Tang is Xie He, the author of the above-mentioned *Classification of Painters*. Xie was himself a portrait painter, and an assessment of his work can be found in the writings of Yao Zui 姚最 (535-602). Yao informs us of Xie He's intriguing method of practice:

> In painting people's portraits, he did not have to sit opposite them. All he needed was one glance, and he would go to work and wield his brush.[174]

Xie He's "Six Laws of Painting" has canonical status in traditional Chinese and Japanese art history, and the laws have become the object of twentieth-century Western scholarship on Chinese art.[175] The six laws are:

[173] Bush and Shih 1985.

[174] Bush and Shih 1985: 31. Xie He's method of painting a portrait resembles methods recorded in non-Chinese art histories as well; see *Mimesis, representation and sign* below.

> First, spirit resonance, which means vitality; second, Bone Method which is [a way of] using the brush; third, Correspondence to the Object which means the depicting of forms; fourth, Suitability to Type which has to do with the laying on of colours; fifth, Division and Planning, that is, placing and arrangement; and sixth, Transmission by Copying, that is to say the copying of models.[176]

In the introduction to *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih write that while there is some agreement as to the interpretation of the last four laws, the interpretation of the first two laws is subject of frequent discussion. Western scholarship translates the first law in such different terms as "sympathetic responsiveness of the vital, universal spirit", "engender [a sense of] movement [through] spirit consonance" and "vitality, harmonious manner and aliveness". Similarly, Western discourse finds that the second law indicates an appreciation of "boniness, an aesthetic derived from calligraphy". This law has also been connected to the "bone-method" in Chinese physiognomy, in which bone structure defines inner character.

Traditional Chinese art historians also offer varied interpretations. Prior to and during the Tang dynasty, the characteristic of "spirit consonance" was only applied to figural art. Thereafter, the term was also used for other subjects in art, such as landscapes. In the Song dynasty, "spirit consonance" could also refer to a painter's innate talent. The expression defined a quality that could not be learned through practice, but distinguished excellent from mediocre art.

Changing interpretations of Xie He's "Six Laws" lie outside the scope of this thesis. However, it is worth noting that the "Six Laws" stand at the beginning of a long tradition of writing art history in China that accepts painting as an art beyond formal representation, and questions its definitions and values over and over again.

The *Classification of Painters* consists of an introduction followed by entries on artists. This organization is typical for later traditional writings on Chinese art history. Xie He uses a grading system to assess the quality of the artists he discusses. Among the artists that he mentions is Gu Kaizhi.[177] Xie's entry for Gu is surprisingly brief and deprecatory, and in contrast with Gu's traditional fame as a figure painter:

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[175] See for instance Soper 1949, Acker 1954 and 1974 and Cahill 1961. See also Mair 2004 for a comparison between Xie He's "Six Laws" and the "Six Limbs" of traditional Indian painting.
[176] Bush and Shih 1985: 40.
[177] The painter Gu Kaizhi has been mentioned above in connection with the painting *The Admonitions of the Court Instructress*, attributed to him.

Xie finds that Gu ranks third among six classes of painters. Fortunately, other contemporary texts provide us with more information on Gu Kaizhi, and his views on figure painting. According to Bush and Shih:

> Contemporary anecdotes stress his interest in capturing a sitter's personality. For example, he might wait several years before dotting in eye pupils, since "the subtle point where the spirit can be rendered and perfect likeness portrayed lies just in these little spots".[178]

Also, Gu considers that:

> In painting, human figures are most difficult, then landscapes, then dogs and horses. Towers and pavilions are fixed objects, difficult to complete, but easy to render well, and not dependent on a marvelous realization of the conveying of thought. If these are made with technical skill, they cannot lack quality.[179]

It is generally accepted that the purpose of early Chinese figural art is didactic. Bush and Shih write how writers of the Eastern Han Dynasty and the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280) describe murals in palaces that serve as models for conduct. However, more than just instructive, early Chinese writers on art describe images as inspiring. The poet Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232) writes:

> Of those who look at pictures, there is not one who, beholding the Three Majesties and the Five Emperors, would not look up in reverence; nor any that, before a painting of the degenerate rulers of the Three Decadences, would not be moved to sadness. There is no one who, seeing a picture of usurping ministers stealing a throne, would not grind his teeth; nor any who, contemplating a fine scholar of high principles, would not forget to eat.[180]

Again, the writer Wang Wei 王微 (415-443) observes how a painting affects him. Although Wang describes a landscape rather than a portrait, his emotional description reveals how an image moves a viewer:

> I unroll a painting and examine its inscription. It represents strange mountains and seas, verdant forests tossed by the wind, white waters leaping and foaming. Ah, how could this have been accomplished easily. It must have come about through divine inspiration. This is the true feeling of painting.

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[178] Bush and Shih 1985: 20.
[179] Bush and Shih 1985: 24.
[180] Bush and Shih 1985: 26.

In the middle of the ninth century, Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠, an official and member of a family of calligraphers and art collectors, composed another fundamental text in Chinese art history: the *Record of Famous Painters of All Ages* (*Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記). This text is a collection of biographies and essays dealing with pre-Tang and Tang artists. Zhang employs a nine-fold grading system that divided the artists discussed into three major categories, which are again subdivided into three. In the introduction to his work, Zhang reiterates Xie He's six laws, and elaborates on the first law:

> The painters of antiquity were sometimes able to transmit formal likeness while endowing it with a noble vitality. They sought for what was beyond formal likeness in their painting. This is very difficult to discuss with vulgar people. As for today's painters, even if they attain formal likeness, they do not generate spirit resonance. If they were to explore painting through spirit resonance, then inevitably formal likeness would reside in it. . . .As for demons, divinities and human figures, they possess vital movement that can be described and require spirit resonance for completion. If spirit resonance is not pervasive, then formal likeness will be in vain.[181]

Notably, while Zhang recognizes such categories as demons, divinities, human figures and even birds and beasts, like his predecessors, he does not distinguish between types of figural art: he insists on a single, essential element for all types of figure painting, "spirit resonance".

Zhu Jingxuan 朱景玄 (9th century), scholar and author of the roughly contemporaneous *Record of Famous Painters of the Tang Dynasty* (*Tangchao minghua lu* 唐朝名畫錄), holds similar views. Additionally, he explains the difficulty of painting human figures:

> Now, painters give priority to the human figure, ranking birds and beasts next, then landscapes and finally architectural subjects. Why is this?. . .This was entirely because human figures, birds and beasts are active beings of mobile disposition with an infinite range of variations in appearance. It is difficult, therefore, to concentrate their spirits and fix their images.[182]

[181] Bush and Shih 1985: 54.
[182] Bush ans Shih 1985: 76.

Like Zhang, Zhu divides the artists he discusses into three main categories, which he terms "capable" (*neng* 能), "excellent" (*miao* 妙) and "inspired" (*shen* 神). However, he also includes a class of "untrammeled" painters (*yipin* 逸品). The "untrammeled painters" are excellent, but they are not officially part of the system. The "untrammeled class" remained an important category in later classifications, and it often included painters of themes associated with the Chan school. However, later Chinese art historians did not always regard this category positively. Chapter Three will discuss the evaluation of this category in Song and Yuan times, and it will show how this influenced the evaluation of painters of Chan themes.

According to Zhu, a real painter is an almost otherworldly being, and painting becomes an almost spiritual practice:

> I have heard that men of old say that a painter is a sage; doubtless because he searches out that which is beyond heaven and earth, and reveals that which is unillumined by the sun and moon.[183]

Two entries in the *Record of Famous Painters of the Tang Dynasty* describe two of the best-known figure painters of the Tang, and serve to illuminate Zhu's observations of quality in figure painting and portraiture. The first entry is for Wu Daozi 吳道子 (fl. c. 710-760), mural painter of Buddhist and Daoist subjects.[184] Zhu writes of Wu's painting "Five Sages and Their Thousand Officials":

> The painting's palaces and halls and figures in ceremonial dress, all seem to aspire to the clouds and dragons, so that one's mind was turned to the creative powers of Nature. . . .He painted, as well, five dragons in the Inner Hall, whose scaly armour moved in flight. Whenever it was about to rain, a mist would rise from them.

Apparently, Wu captured the spirit of the five dragons he painted to the extent that viewers could sense their physical presence, and, naturally, Zhu counts Wu among the best: Wu is ranked in the "top grade" of the "inspired class".

Zhou Fang, while a slightly "lesser" artist (Zhou belongs to the "middle grade" of the "inspired class"), is still an extremely able portraitist. The following anecdote indicates his talent for portraiture. In the story, a certain Zhao Zong's 趙縱 wife is

[183] Bush and Shih 1985: 48.
[184] Wu was an influential figure for many Song and Yuan artists, and his style may be connected to the work of painters of Chan themes, too.

asked which of two portraits of her husband is a better likeness, a portrait by Han Gan 韓幹(c. 715-after 781), or a portrait by Zhou Fang. She answers:

> 'Both paintings are likenesses, but the second one is better'. . .'The first painting has merely captured my husband's appearance, while the second has also conveyed his spirit vitality. It has caught his personality and his manner of laughing and talking.'[185]

In both Zhu's observations, "spirit resonance" defeats formal likeness. "Spirit resonance" renders life to visual form, and it describes tangible, physical presence.

*Painting beyond visual form*

In the Song dynasty, art and art-historical writing developed considerably. The proliferation of pictorial genres corresponded with the development of new types of texts on art, such as manuals for artists and collectors. An early Song project, that, however, knew limited growth, was a novel organization of biographies of artists, based on subject categories, rather than the classes of earlier grading systems. An example of this new approach is the *Catalogue of Paintings in the Xuanhe Collection* (*Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜), compiled by scholar-officials at the court of the Huizong emperor 徽宗 (r. 1101-1126). The *Catalogue of Paintings in the Xuanhe Collection* lists the following ten categories: (a) Buddhist and Daoist subjects, (b) figure painting, (c) architecture, (d) barbarians, (e) dragons and fishes, (f) landscapes, (g) domestic and wild animals, (h) flowers and birds, (i) ink and bamboo and (j) vegetables and fruit.

The authors base their distinctions on excerpts from texts of the Confucian canon explaining the meaning of pictorial subjects. Again, issues familiar to modern, Western art-historical discourse, such as verisimilitude, are of minor importance. Interestingly, the authors write that they place the category of Buddhist and Daoist subjects at the head of their list, because all other topics complete this first theme. The *Catalogue of Paintings in the Xuanhe Collection* describes how Buddhist and Daoist images affect a viewer's emotions:

> Painting, too, is an art, and when one has advanced to the marvelous, one does not know whether art is the Dao or the Dao is art.. . .Thus, the painting of Daoist and

[185] Bush and Shih 1985: 57.

> Buddhist images as well as of the bearing and appearance of Confucian figures causes men to look upon them with reverence. If there is comprehension from created form, how can this be called a small advantage? Therefore, the three religions [of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism] are all included in the category of Buddhist and Daoist subjects.[186]

In accordance with earlier views in Chinese art-historical writing, the authors imply that the experience of painting extends beyond the visual. Painting does not only appeal to viewers through form, it triggers viewers' minds to comprehend things that lie beyond visual form.

One of the most influential texts of Song art-historical writing is *An Account of My Experiences in Painting* (*Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞志), by Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛 (act. last half 11th century). Guo wrote his account as a sequel to Zhang Yanyuan's *Record of Famous Painters of All Ages*. However, he does not organize artists according to class or subject matter, but simply lists them according to historical period. Guo's work starts with essays on general topics. On what figure painting means, he writes:

> I have examined discussions of painting by former worthies. Their primary emphasis on the depiction of figures is not solely due to problems of spiritual vitality, or structural method, drapery patterning, or spatial positioning. Those of the ancients who had to treat of formal representations of sages and worthies or historical events of bygone times, sucking their brushes and commanding silk to compose them into paintings, wished to appraise critically their worth or folly or to shed light on their stability or disorder.[187]

Guo also discusses how different types of figures should be painted. His list of figures does not distinguish between mortals and immortals, nor does he explain how to paint particular physical features. All of his instructions are with regard to "spirit resonance":

> In the case of Buddhist monks, the faces [should tell of] good works and practical expedients [to gain salvation].. . .In the case of monarchs, it is proper to honour their appearance of supreme sanctity, like the very orb of heaven. In the case of outer barbarians, one must catch their mood of devotion to the Chinese empire in respectful obedience.. . .With [guardian kings like] Indra, one should display a terrifying and auspicious, sternly imposing demeanor. With demon guardians, one creates an effect of hideousness and swift motion.[188]

[186] Bush and Shih 1985: 108.
[187] Bush and Shih 1985: 93.
[188] Bush and Shih 1985: 109.

Guo Ruoxu's understanding of objectives in art and portraiture is in accordance with traditional art-historical writing. One crucial difference is that Guo distinguishes artists on the basis of their social status. He does this for contemporary painters of the Northern Song, whom he divides into emperors, nobles and scholar-officials and recluses. He validates this distinction through a new interpretation of "spirit resonance": according to Guo, "spirit resonance" refers, not just to capturing "the spirit" in a painting, but to an artist's talent and character.

*Art and social conditions*

In addition to developing the term to include both painting and painter, Guo believes that "spirit resonance" is not a condition that can be mastered through learning or practice. Therefore, artists in possession of this quality must be persons of refinement and privileged social circumstance. Guo's method of organization persists in two other important classification texts of the Song and Yuan dynasties: *"Painting" Continued* (*Huaji* 畫繼) and *Supplement to "Painting" Continued* (*Huaji buyi* 畫繼補遺). The authors of these texts, sequels to Guo's work, are Deng Chun 鄧椿 (c. 1167) and Zhuang Su 莊肅 (c. 1298). Deng agrees with Guo's position in the following statement:

> When Guo Ruoxu deeply despised common artisans, saying [of their work] "although called 'painting', it will not be painting" it was because they were only able to transmit the form and could not transmit the spirit. Therefore "animation through spirit consonance" is the first of the laws of painting, and Ruoxu was right when he only attributed it to those in high positions or in retirement.[189]

Amongst different categories of painters, Deng and Zhuang develop lists for Buddhist and Daoist monk painters. However, while their judgment of several monk painters is important, it cannot provide an unambiguous evaluation of an artistic theme such as Chan eccentric portraiture. Their criticism is primarily directed at painters, not paintings, and, accordingly, different painters of Chan eccentrics are judged

[189] Bush and Shih 1985: 132.

differently.[190] Zhuang's different notes of two famous painters of Chan subjects, Muqi 牧谿 (act. mid-late 13th century) and Liang Kai, are telling examples:

> [Muqi's] desiccated and pallid rustic wildernesses are certainly not for elegant diversion, but are suitable only for a Buddhist's chamber or a Daoist's hut as a complement to the pure and secluded atmosphere. . .[Liang Kai's] free and easy drawing surpassed that of his teacher, and people of the day all praised him.[191]

Indeed, this passage shows that only a "true artist" is able to exploit "spirit resonance".

The writings of Guo, Deng and Zhuang reflect changes in art-historical thought starting from the late Northern Song period. These authors' definition of the artist as a member of an elite group concurs with conceptualizations of the artist in the literati theory of art. First formulated by Su Shi, this theory defined painting as a "polite art", on a par with calligraphy and poetry. Su was also the first to write that "true painting" is practiced by scholar-painters, not artisans:

> Looking at scholars' painting is like judging the best horses of the empire: one sees how spirit has been brought out; but when it comes to artisan-painters, one usually just gets whip and skin, stable and fodder, without one speck of superior achievement.[192]

Susan Bush shows that we should understand that the literati theory of art did not step away from traditional art history, or contrast with earlier views of representation and likeness.[193] The new type of painting it advanced was not defined in terms of style, or subject matter.[194] The theory simply progressed from existing views, and developed concepts of the painter and the painter's role in more detail.

The literati theory also argued that "spirit resonance" was an essential element of any type of painting: not just figural art, but landscapes, too. The emphasis in the art-historical writings of the members of Su's literati circle is on landscapes. However, certain figural subjects are still considered superior, including Buddhist subjects. In the *History of Painting* (*Huashi* 畫史), Su Shi's friend and connoisseur at the Song court Mi Fu 米芾 (1052-1107) writes:

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[190] Chapter Three on painters will consider these views.
[191] Bush and Shih 1985: 139.
[192] Bush and Shih 1985: 196.
[193] Bush 1971.
[194] Subjects characteristic of the scholarly painting genre, such as the plum or bamboo, developed only gradually.

> In examining paintings, Buddhist subjects and narrative paintings that offer exhortations and warnings are superior. Next comes landscape with its inexhaustible flavour, hazy scenes with mists and clouds being especially fine. Next come bamboo, trees, water and rocks, then flowers and grasses. As for court ladies, birds and beasts, the aristocracy may enjoy viewing them, but they are not included among the purer enjoyments.[195]

Mi's valuation of Buddhist subjects is significant. It reflects, albeit indirectly, the existence of connections between literati, and Buddhist and Daoist circles. The exact nature of this relationship and the mutual influences that resulted from it are intriguing, and deserve further research. References to Buddhism and Daoism are found throughout literati texts, and several members of the literati circle were known for their friendships with Chan abbots. I will explore these connections in Chapter Three.

### *Paintings, painters and "true naturalness"*

Art criticism in the Yuan dynasty develops on two different levels. One type of literature advances Song literati theories. The best-known Yuan texts to do so are Tang Hou's 湯后 (act. early 14th century) *A Discussion of Painting* (*Hualun* 畫論) and *Criticisms of Past and Present Painting* (*Gujin huajian* 古今畫鑑). Tang, a scholar-official, supports Su Shi's concept of the painter as a refined gentleman, and urges viewers to look for "true naturalness" (*tianzhen* 天真) in painting. "True naturalness", is essentially another way of describing "spirit resonance": it is what viewers will find in the best art productions, and through which they will also know an artist's talent and character. Tang Hou acknowledges that by early Yuan times, landscape painting, rather than figural art, heads the list of subject categories. Nonetheless, he recognizes that figure painting is the most difficult type of painting. Tang strengthens his argument using quotes of earlier scholars, including a colophon by the famous Yuan scholar Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322) on a painting of the Western regions by the Tang dynasty painter Yan Liben:

> In painting, the most difficult subject is the human figure.. . .In this painting, everything has attained the level of excellence. Even hair and facial expressions are vivid, as if the figures were about to speak. Perhaps they may even exist in the divine

[195] Bush and Shih 1985: 235.

> realm, between emptiness and nonbeing. […] In painting, excellence lies in capturing character and emotion.[196]

The second type of Yuan art-historical writing consists of technical literature and manuals on how to do various types of painting. Wang Yi's 王繹 (act. c. 1360) *Secrets of Portrait Painting* (*Xiexiang mijue* 寫像秘訣) is the earliest extant writing dedicated entirely to portrait painting. Wang Yi describes how to achieve formal likeness through physiognomy. Yet, even in this text, the author shows that portraiture's objective is a description of character, rather than physical likeness. Wang's description of his method of painting portraits is revealing:

> Only during a lively conversation will [people's faces] show their original and true character. Then I remain quiet and try to seek it, silently noting it in my mind. Even with my eyes closed, it is as if I had the features before my eyes and, when I release my brush, it is as if the face were already beneath my brush's tip.. . .The artists of modern times are like people who want to play the zither with pegs glued down and are ignorant of the Dao of change and movement. They ask their subjects to sit stiffly erect, with garments neatly arranged, like clay statues, then they begin to describe them. This is why they do not succeed even once in ten thousand attempts.[197]

Eight centuries of Chinese art-historical texts underline that portraiture is one of the most intriguing genres in art. Portraiture is embedded in both spirit and likeness, and throughout the pre-Tang, Tang, Song and Yuan periods, artists and art critics struggle to articulate a correct balance between these two elements.

The study of portraiture touches upon fundamental issues in art in China, as well as in other art histories. These include art as likeness or mimesis, art as representation and the connection between art and semiotics, or the study of signs. Contemporary scholarship questions definitions and values for these foundational elements in art history, and current debates in Western art history raise possibilities of a radical revision of the entire field.

## MIMESIS, REPRESENTATION AND SIGN

Perfect likeness, achieved through "spirit resonance", is a major issue in traditional Chinese art-historical writing. All traditional texts also agree that capturing "spirit

[196] Bush and Shih 1985: 271.
[197] Bush and Shih 1985: 272.

resonance" is most difficult in figural art, especially in representations of the human figure.

The problem of portraying human figures is also central to Western art-historical debate. Formal correspondence of an object to its subject facilitates recognition in viewers: in portraits, physical likeness appeals directly to the visual sense. However, discourse shows that issues other than the question of physical likeness are simultaneously at work in processes of viewing portrait images. Portraits are, in fact, discussions between portraitists and viewers on the construction of identity. Current debates in Western art history on the various aspects of portraits as likenesses, as representations and as sign, are helpful for understanding portraits of Chan eccentrics, since in these paintings the eccentrics are, like all other portrayees, identities constructed by portraitists and viewers.

### *Mimesis and constructing identities*

In *Portraiture*, Richard Brilliant argues that portraits stand out among all other art forms.[198] Portraits are a response to the tendency of human beings to think about themselves, and they are concerned with issues of self and identity. There is always a difficulty in thinking about portraits as art objects, rather than as persons represented. Portraits also stimulate personal involvement in a viewer. They can have intense emotional effects on viewers, and they can invite extreme reactions. Often, portraits are presumed to have magical qualities, a point that is sometimes overlooked in Western historical discussions of the Western portraiture tradition. For instance, Joanna Woodall, editor of *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, writes that in medieval Europe, prior to the Renaissance, portrait figures were made on a reduced scale.[199] She argues that the reason for this tendency was a fear that naturalistic portraiture would lead to an identification of the portrait image with the divine. Reduced-scale figures could lay no claim to belong to the immortal or possess immortal virtues. In other contexts, naturalistic portraiture was considered dangerous, as it also lent magical qualities to its makers.[200] Similar phenomena in Chinese art history are not therefore exceptional or exotic quirks. In China, texts refer to portraits that come to

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[198] Brilliant 1991.
[199] Woodall 1997.
[200] See for instance Davis 1997.

life and perform human acts. The best-known example dates from as early as the Han dynasty, when the funerary portrait of a lady starts crying in front of her astonished son.

The singular characteristics of portraiture often stimulate the study of portraits with overriding emphasis on either the portrayee or the artist.[201] Woodall describes how this happened in the history of Western art. Portraiture stood at the heart of what she calls the "naturalist project". This assumes that perfection in art is achieved through ever-increasing degrees of lifelikeness. Traditional historians of Western art such as Petrarch (1304-1374) and Vasari (1511-1574) contribute to this assumption through their definitions of high-quality artworks: these are imbued with a sense of realism. The issue of realism in art and portraiture is challenged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when Impressionists and Expressionists interrogate the connection between physiognomy and identity. In discussions of that period, portraiture is central to new formulations of identity, especially to conceptions of such dualities as subject and object and new ideas of the body and the self.

Woodall describes portraiture as a "divine force that renders present what is absent". Simultaneously, she acknowledges, portraiture is disappointing, as it cannot lay claim to absolute truth and replace its subject. In the history of portraiture, portraits have often been theorized as unmediated realism, yet they were always subjected to conventions of artistic representation. In *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, seven authors discuss seven different cases of portraiture, and for each case, contexts and roles identify the portrait image, not the question of likeness.[202]

Similarly, Brilliant's main argument is that portraits are more than exact likenesses. He believes disproportionate considerations of externalities of reference overshadow the intrinsic formal properties of a portrait. In *Portraiture*, Brilliant therefore sets out to investigate the "programme" of portraits, which refers to ways in which portraiture constructs identities. In this theory, a portrait expresses the relationship between an image and its original, as perceived and intended by the portraitist.[203] Brilliant provides the reader with a telling example from ancient Rome.

[201] Brilliant 1991.
[202] Woodall 1997.
[203] In *Portraiture*, Brilliant does not explore "the viewer" as much as he explores "the artist". I believe viewers are as much involved in constructing identities of portrait images as artists, see also the section on art as sign below.

In this story, the artist Carterius makes a portrait image of the third-century philosopher Plotinus for his patron Amelius.

> [Plotinus] showed. . .an unconquerable reluctance to sit to a painter or a sculptor, and when Amelius persisted in urging him to allow of a portrait being made he asked him, "Is it not enough to carry about this image in which nature has enclosed us? Do you really think I must also consent to leave, as a desirable spectacle to posterity, an image of an image?"
>
> In view of this determined refusal, Amelius brought his friend Carterius, the best artist of the day, to the Conferences,. . .and saw to it that by long observation of the philosopher he caught the most striking personal traits. From the impressions thus stored in mind the artist drew a first sketch; Amelius made various suggestions towards bringing out the resemblance, and in this way, without the knowledge of Plotinus, the genius of Carterius gave us a lifelike portrait.[204]

The portrait of Plotinus is the result of a long process of "image-making and image-matching". Brilliant argues that "the exact likeness" of Plotinus has no function in this anecdote. We do not know what Plotinus looked like, or in what way his portrait bears the influence of Carterius' artistic style. Simultaneously, Carterius' approach is fascinating. He observed Plotinus over a long period of time in the specific context of the Conferences. Thus, Carterius created a portrait of Plotinus *in a particular form*. Amelius next added helpful comments. Finally, artist and patron combined to make a portrait "that would transcend the limitations of Plotinus' own life" with an "abstract, representative function". Yet, the portrait would always be "an image of an image".[205]

Brilliant's observations in *Portraiture* help to open up the field of portrait studies. His research shows that portraits are visual studies of personality, rather than descriptions of how a particular person looks. Also, this theory shows that the creation of a portrait cannot be defined by a moment of physical confrontation between an artist and a sitter alone. Brilliant writes:

> The artist's approach to portraiture as a journey of discovery may be almost infinitely varied, so long as the art work provides a name and reasonable access to the subject, sufficient to bring the person portrayed to the viewer's mind.[206]

Thus redefined, portraiture encompasses a much wider variety of artistic methods and expressions. Brilliant provides many examples to illustrate this. For instance, he

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[204] Brilliant 1991: 16.
[205] Brilliant 1991: 17. Plotinus' words are fully within the Platonic tradition of regarding art as an imitation of the way things appear.
[206] Brilliant 1991: 155.

describes a 1917 portrait of Marie Laurencin by Francis Picabia which is, literally, a painting of an imaginary machine. Portraits by Francis Bacon, Brilliant writes, "of popes, friends, patrons, of himself, all seem to look alike, as if he were seeking to express himself through their contorted images".[207] Another fine example is a 1906 painting of Gertrude Stein by Pablo Picasso. Stein sat for Picasso no less than 80 times, but without satisfactory results. Only when Picasso returned from Spain, where he had looked at Iberian stone sculpture, did he find the right way to paint Stein. There were many complaints that the portrait did not look like Gertrude Stein. However, it is documented that both Picasso and Stein were pleased with it.

One of the most important consequences of Brilliant's analysis is that it draws attention to the fine line between portraits of "real" or historical persons and paintings of persons with uncertain historicities. Brilliant discusses portraits of the most famous bard of Western-classical antiquity, Homer. As in the case of Plotinus, we do not know what Homer looked like. However, neither did Homer's portraitists. Homer's portraits are from a much later period than the assumed dates for his lifetime.[208] Therefore, according to Brilliant, likeness in portraits of Homer can be defined as a formative concept: it is based on the multiplication of physical details in unique, identifiable patterns.[209]

The approach of a formative concept of likeness is not very different from approaches to likeness discussed in the example of the portrait of Plotinus and the early twentieth-century examples above. None of these likenesses are wholly based on physical confrontations between artist and subject. Neither are the likenesses perfect with regard to physical detail. Even, in the Picabia likeness, Marie Laurencin's portrait does not share a single physical similarity with its subject. All this shows that portraiture as an object that communicates likeness connects painters or sculptors, portrayees and viewers, on a level beyond that of pure visual sense: as the construction of an identity, the portrait image has a social character. The social nature of portraiture is related to an understanding of the portrait as a representation, and as sign.

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[207] Brilliant 1991: 156.
[208] There is serious doubt in contemporary scholarship regarding the existence of a historical personage named Homer. Most theories assume that different artists are responsible for the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.
[209] Brilliant 1971.

*Representation*

Many thinkers have considered the portrait as a representation, rather than a likeness. This method of exploring portraiture has connotations for portraits of Chan eccentrics, too. As constructed identities, and in particular identities of persons with uncertain historicities, these portraits are expressions of ideas and vehicles of communication, as much as they are intended likenesses.

In the *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Alan Goldman discusses representation.[210] He starts with Plato's definition of the term: according to Plato, artists imitate the way things appear. In this context, imitation does not refer to a simple copy of how things appear visually, for the result of artists' imitations are not duplications, but resemblances. Moreover, the resulting resemblances are not between an object and its illustration, but refer to a resemblance of visual experiences. Additionally, Goldman finds that in representation, intention is a necessary criterion. Intention decides which objects and which of their properties are represented. Of import to the present chapter is Goldman's argument that intention is essential in representations of mythical characters. Based on a resemblance of visual experiences alone, he argues, an abstract painting entitled "Moses" would not succeed in representing Moses. However, when we understand that the image involves the dual criterion of intention and resemblance, we will know that it represents an artist's image of a man. Goldman's statement, in fact, proposes framing the resemblance of visual experiences from multiple positions, in the same way that recent studies of "non-Western" art frame their research from multiple localities.[211] He shows that we need to consider a variety of factors before we define and judge representation.

*Representation as communication*

For David Summers, representation is primarily communication.[212] He presents several views of Western scientists and philosophers on representation, including those of Galileo and Descartes. According to Galileo, sensory perception is subjective, and representation is not so much of things as of relations. Again, Descartes believes

[210] Goldman 2003.
[211] See the discussions of Dehejia, Murray and Spiro above.
[212] Summers 1996.

that the mind, not the eye, is the agency that actually sees, and he separates the representation of things in the mind from actual form.

Summers argues that representation is integral to the history of Western art, and images function as substitutes. For instance, he writes, fruit in Roman paintings stood for the sensory qualities of the real fruit. Later, however, oranges in paintings of Jan van Eyck (1390-1441) communicate the prosperity of the painter's patrons. Summers sees here a change in the understanding of representation between Antiquity and medieval Europe. He characterizes this as a development of representation from sign to symbol. He observes that according to Aristotle, painted figures represented signs of character. In contrast, in medieval Europe, the De Medici patrons asked the painter Vasari to paint the portraits of two counselors, not as likenesses, but symbolically, in the form of the figures of Silence and Virtue. By this time, painting as representation was used as an allegory or symbol.

Whether certain art-historical periods can be connected to particular, exclusive understandings of representation is open to debate. However, Summers is right to state that we can only inquire about the element "resemblance" in representation after we consider all connotations of representation.

The work of Goldman and Summers offers ways to understand a tricky but important distinction in visual representation: the distinction between portraiture and the larger field of figural art. Utmost caution is needed when distinguishing between these two categories. As representation, all figural art, including portraiture, serves to communicate experience.[213] Images of figures with uncertain historicities, classified in art-historical discourse as "figural art", can, in certain contexts, communicate the same visual realities as other, physiognomic likenesses, classified as "portraiture". Portrait images in "non-Western" art histories, as well as Brilliant's examples of Western portraits that are far from exact likenesses, are instances where any classification as "portraiture" or "figural art" should only be made after careful consideration.

This also holds for images of Chan eccentrics. I propose that these paintings need to be defined as portraits, and that they are representations that serve to communicate the same visual realities as portraits of historical Chan abbots. As shown

[213] In fact, the idea of "art as representation" holds for all artistic genres, including landscapes and still-life studies. Most intriguing in this context is that in Western art history, the term portraiture was not restricted to illustrations of the human subject until the seventeenth century. Before that date, portraits included paintings of animals, city views and religious subjects, see also Woodall 1997.

in the first section of this chapter, aesthetically, images of the eccentrics refer to a resemblance of visual experience through the consistent use of unique visual characteristics: the artistic emphasis on all portraits of eccentrics is on issues of movement, space and liveliness, and all images are completely focused on the persona of the eccentric. Additionally, the paintings are visual realities to painters and viewers, not only as based on views of figure painting in the Chinese art-historical texts discussed briefly above, but even more so as read in correspondence with abbots' writings collected in the Chan canon. Chapters Three and Five elaborate on this concept through an investigation of contexts of production and reception of eccentric portraits. This approach is based on a third important aspect of art, and portraiture: the portrait as sign.

*Sign and its materiality in Western and Chinese portraits*

As art objects and as portraits, images of Chan eccentrics are signs. The portraits exist within social formation: painters and viewers accord meaning to them and infer meaning from them. In order to gain a sense of valuations for Chan portraiture, it is important first to understand how art functions as sign.

In *Critical terms for Art History*, Alex Potts shows how art, to its viewers, has significance, not simply as a thing, but as sign.[214] On a basic level, art functions as sign, simply by being recognized as art. Art points to non-material significance. This occurs through conventions of which we may not be aware: viewers infer meaning from objects on the basis of their experience of decoding signs.

Potts elaborates on theories in semiotics that discuss how signs operate. According to Charles Sanders Peirce, the "sign" is tripartite, and consists of the elements "sign", "object" and "interpretant". These elements are linked in "unlimited semiosis": the interpretant, who links an object to a particular sign, can themselves become a new sign to a new interpretant. Even the object, anchor to this system of interpretation, is dynamic and ever-developing. For instance, viewers can understand Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* first as a painting, and next as a figure set in landscape, as a portrait, as representing the person of Mona Lisa or in relation to images of femininity. There is no end to interpretation. Rather, interpretation is about

[214] Potts 1996. Potts focuses on "art" as a sign, but, of course, any object can function as a sign. Classifying an object as "art" is, in fact, the first step in a process of signification.

"blocking" chains of signification. Blocking occurs when we recognize the painting as a painting, and not just as paint on canvas, or as a figure set in a landscape, instead of as abstract form. Blocking also occurs through tangible interaction with the object, for instance if someone paints a moustache on the *Mona Lisa*, or when, in the Louvre, the painting is protected by bullet-proof glass.

There is a duality in the application of semiotics in visual studies. Semiotics helps to understand how form works, not just at a purely visual level, but as an articulation of meaning. However, whether a methodology founded in linguistics works for art is debatable. Potts explains that artworks do not function as texts. Images lack the double articulation of language, which consists of units and meaningless subunits. Also, the visual image is continuous, and it is impossible to develop a dictionary to understand its individual elements. Codes in visual studies do not constitute an autonomous language, but are embedded in cultural conventions. Contemporary art-historical studies prefer the materialist approach to art as a sign. This approach investigates how art as a sign compels subjects to take note of objects, and how subjects interact with objects.

The materiality of the visual sign is also central to Norman Bryson's *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*.[215] *Vision and Painting* is written as a critique of the work of Ernst Gombrich, particularly of *Art and Illusion*.[216] It challenges Gombrich's definition of painting as a record of the perception of a painter. Through this definition, Gombrich attempts to move away from the idea of the "Essential Copy", or painting as a non-historical entity, in traditional Western art history.[217] Bryson argues that by focusing entirely on the painter and ignoring the relationship between a painting and its viewer, Gombrich, in fact, reiterates the idea of the "Essential Copy", denying the social character of an image and its reality as a sign. An image activates codes of recognition produced by social formation. Neither social formation nor sign exist beforehand in mutual exteriority. However, in the act of viewing, social formation and sign interact and produce meaning. Viewing transforms the material of painting into meanings, and this transformation is perpetual, variable and fluctuating according to social discourse. Bryson observes that images are

[215] Bryson 1983.
[216] Gombrich 1959.
[217] The "Essential Copy" is similar to Joanna Woodall's "naturalist project" discussed above.

inherently polysemic, because images depend on interaction with social discourse for recognition. The purpose of materialist art history, then, is

> the recovery or retrieval of evidence left behind by previous interaction of image with discourse, and the correlation of that evidence with what can be discovered about the social formation's historical development.[218]

Bryson's emphasis on painting as a sign is convincing. However, his presentation of differences between Western and Chinese painting unduly simplifies matters. Based on a comparison that employs just one Chinese and one Japanese painting, Bryson submits that Western and Chinese art histories differ entirely with regard to representation.[219] Painting in the West, he writes, is directed towards the disappearance of the body as the site of the image, for the painter and the viewer. In contrast, in China, the body of labour is on constant display: paintings are structured through brushwork. This difference affects temporality in painting. In the West, the time of the painting process is usurped by the time of the illustrated event, while in China, the performative aspect of brushwork remains visible in the finished image. As a result, painting in the West triggers contemplative gaze in the viewer, while painting in China, which does not bracket out the process of viewing, activates shifting glances. Such analysis ignores that different kinds of representation existed in China.

The contemplative gaze in Western painting is the result of a particular relationship between two basic elements in painting, denotation and connotation, and the viewer as an individuated subject. Prior to the Renaissance, Bryson writes, images presented scriptures. In these images, meaning was denoted: the images required only a minimal scheme of elements, which, moreover, would lead to immediate visual recognition in the viewer. The introduction of connotation, or the projection of cultural content in painting, required images to be viewed in isolation. This isolation referred to both physical isolation, for instance through frames, and isolation from the "global *langue*", or conventional schemes of images. The *Annunciation* by the Master of the Barberini Panels is an early example of the use of connotation in painting. The

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[218] Bryson 1983: 85. Materialist art history needs to be aware that its objects continue to generate meaning. Thus, research needs to be both archival and critical.

[219] Clunas shows that the differences that Bryson detects can easily be countered with just as many similarities between these two major art traditions (Clunas 1997b). Additionally, I believe that Bryson's definitions are also invalid with regard to individual examples of different art traditions within China, as we shall see below.

image is a variation on the Annunciation theme, showing not all the different stages of the Annunciation but only a part. According to Bryson,

> at the level of information, the *Annunciation* refers not only to the general *langue* of Gospel schemata, but to a specialized set of subdivisions within the Annunciation topos. This kind of fine-tuning in the reading of symbols constructs the viewer firmly, and independently of whatever may be happening within the spatial construction of the image, as the receiver of this single and highly particularized schema. . .It assumes a viewing subject who can be relied on to perform immediate scansion of this "unique" Annunciation, and who is accordingly being treated more as a connoisseur than as a choric worshipper.[220]

In addition to its employment of connotative elements, the *Annunciation* constructs its viewer through an organization of space. It assumes the viewer to occupy a particular spot opposite the image, in order to view the painting correctly. Bryson shows how later painters continue to focus on the physique of the spectator. The painter Alberti refines the idea of the "punctual subject" found in the *Annunciation*. In the work of Raphael, the viewer is given no single point from which to see the image. Concomitantly, the viewer's persona changes from religious witness to objective identity. At the end of this process, in the work of such painters as Titian and Vermeer, the viewer, finally, becomes a disembodied gaze. In particular Vermeer breaks all bonds with the viewer's physique, and in his paintings the spectator is an "unexpected presence, rather than a theatrical audience".

Bryson's analysis proves Vermeer's exceptional talent to manipulate perception:

> . . .Viewing the image becomes impossible. At no single distance from the painting will the spectator discover its global intelligibility, for the painting is not conceived in the model of a physical transaction, but non-empirically, as a plurality of local transcriptions which nowhere melt in the fusion of a simultaneous disclosure.[221]

However, to contrast the work of Vermeer, whom Bryson, in fact, categorizes as the epitome of the Western painter, to *all* paintings ever made and viewed in the history of art in China, is a problematic generalization. Chinese artists may not have employed the exact same methods to manipulate vision as artists in the West, but there is no reason to assume that vision in Chinese painting was primarily durational,

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[220] Bryson 1983: 101.
[221] Bryson 1983: 116.

or that Chinese painting was judged "much as performative art is judged in the West". Chan eccentric portraiture as a category can serve to illuminate a variety of uses of vision, which I will discuss in Chapters Three, Four and Five. For now, in the context of Bryson's work, it is striking to consider that one of Chan eccentric portraiture's main effects could have been the transformation of the viewing subject into precisely the "disembodied, contemplative gaze" that he holds to be unique to Western art. Major evidence for this assumption is offered by Chan abbots' appreciations of portraits of eccentrics. These appreciations are introduced below.

## 3. CHAN ART AND PORTRAITURE RECONSIDERED

### TRUE LIKENESS AND THE SELF:
### INTERPRETING THE VISUAL SIGN IN CHAN COMMENTARIES

According to the biography of Chan master Zhaozhou 趙州 (778-897) in the *Transmission Record of the Jingde Era*

> There was a monk who drew the master's true image and presented it to him. The master said: 'Tell me, does this resemble me or not? If it resembles me, then strike this old monk dead. If it does not resemble me, then burn up the true image.' The monk was at a loss for words.[222]

This excerpt shows that in the context of Chinese Buddhist portraiture, it is impossible to understand figural art without considering issues of true likeness and the self within the Buddhist tradition. The discussion in section two has pointed out that portraiture in both Western and Chinese art history tries to be an image of the self, even though it is often an image of an image. But what if portraits are created in a tradition that does not recognize a unique, individual self? Buddhist texts generally do not define a soul or self. What is identified as the individual self is in Buddhist theory, in fact, a collection of different awarenesses, including the senses and the mind.[223] Moreover, this collection of awarenesses is, like all other phenomena, subject to causes and conditions, and constantly changing and transforming.

[222] Foulk and Sharf 1993-1994: 203.
[223] On the modular nature of body and mind in Buddhist theory, see Hayes 1996.

In Chinese art, terms for portraits and Buddhist portraiture (*zhen* 真, *xiang* 像, *dingxiang* 頂相) seem to play with questions of likeness and presence, too. While *xiang* 'likeness' can also be used for portraits of secular figures, *zhen* 'true image' and *dingxiang*, a term that originally referred to the invisible protrusion on the Buddha's head, were the most commonly used terms for portraits in a Buddhist context.

Portraiture is a major topic in Chan literature, and this literature contains, in fact, the first and most important valuation of Chan paintings. Chan sources make clever use of the Chinese term for portrait, *zhen*, which can also be translated as "true" or "truth". Early on, in the first unified Chan genealogical compendium, the *Patriarch's Hall Collection*, a Chan teacher and his students discuss the meaning of portraiture:

> when the teacher was approaching the time of his death he addressed his congregation and said: 'Is there anyone among you who can render my true image? If there is one here who can render my true image, then present it to this old monk to see.' The congregation all proceeded to draw his true image and then presented them to the abbot. The teacher gave them all a beating. Then one disciple, Puhua, came forward and said: 'I have rendered the teacher's true image.' The teacher said: 'Give it to this old monk to see.' Puhua did a somersault and left.[224]

Such comments on portrait images, on the surfaces of paintings as well as in collected discourse records, are puzzling and open to multiple interpretations. A fruitful way of understanding word-play in anecdotes is to read them in connection with the portrait image in its function as sign. While Chan abbots may seem, at first glance, to argue against art and portraiture, this is not the case. Commentators, in fact, rarely deliver pronounced judgments. Instead, the emphasis on most comments is on questioning.

By constantly questioning preconceived ideas of students, and viewers, about portraits, likenesses and art, abbots overrule the possibility of a single, unique and dominant interpretation of a particular image. Thus, they prevent blocking chains of signification that are the result of the portrait as sign. The interpretation of the paintings, then, is left to "unlimited semiosis". The emphasis is on the existence of the painted image, which has itself been turned into an object of contemplation. Additionally, I would argue that the Chan questioning of preconceived ideas about art needs to be seen alongside Chan comments on the tradition of Buddhist texts. As

[224] Foulk and Sharf 1993-1994: 202-203

discussed in Chapter One, scholars have often interpreted Chan comments on Buddhist texts and their use for Chan as a rejection of the textual tradition. These scholars have understood Chan as a tradition that moves away from texts. An alternative approach is to read comments on the function of texts within Chan not as judgments or definitions, but as questions that lead to a contemplation on the nature of texts, too. Further, these two strands of questioning can be said to come together in paintings of Chan monks reading and writing, mentioned briefly above. These paintings question ideas about art and texts, for instance when the monks "read" empty scrolls, or tear up scrolls.

Commentaries of Chan monks on paintings may be found at the end of their discourse records under the heading "Eulogies to Paintings of the Buddha and the Patriarchs" or "Portrait Eulogies". The commentaries may be divided into several sections. The most important is that of commentaries of Chan abbots on their own portraits. Next, there are commentaries on paintings of Chan patriarchs, Buddhist deities such as the Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Guanyin, Luohan, paintings of the Buddha, of historical abbots and of legendary figures, including the eccentrics. The categories of paintings with commentaries in discourse records do not distinguish between levels of accurate likeness in the paintings, or the historicity of painted subjects. Instead, they subject all illustrations to similar considerations. Again, this is in line with what abbots' comments propose: the categories reflect only minimal differentiation and avoid blocking the visual sign of the portrait image through interpretation. Chapter Three will study the commentaries in detail.

## "CHAN ART"

Part of the Chan canon in both pictorial and textual form, portraits of Chan eccentrics are one of many aspects of Chan art. In contemporary scholarly discourse, the term "Chan art" is loaded. It is a much-encompassing, loose term that can function generically for a variety of art productions from the eleventh century onwards. Also, the term "Chan" in art is often used to describe influences of Chan concepts in Chinese art from the Song dynasty onwards, especially in the literati tradition of art. Chan concepts are assumed to have influenced the formalist view of art of the literati tradition, in particular such characteristics as the elimination of the polarities of subject and object, and the emphasis on brushstrokes. The conceptual influences that

such assumptions refer to are intricate, and further studies are needed to determine their exact nature. However, research is frequently dominated by a vague sense of what Chan in art means, and a various art forms are susceptible to essentializing such as that by Bryson. Traditional Chinese art historians, too, employ the idea of Chan in art in various ways. The famous Ming dynasty artist and art critic Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636), for instance, developed a history of painting in China based on the Northern and Southern Schools of Chan.[225] This history assumed that there was a tradition of coloured landscape painting which corresponded to a tradition of monochrome landscapes just as the Northern School of Chan corresponded to the Southern School. Notably, Dong did not imply a Chan aesthetic basis for either tradition, but only used the concept of the Northern and Southern schools of Chan as an analogy.

Interaction between Chan and literati traditions, with concomitant artistic results, is one of many aspects of Chan art. Another is an understanding of the term "art" for the Chan establishment. Art for the Chan establishment is a rich field of visual practices, in continuous communication with other worlds of art in China. Song Chan monasteries were centers of art production and art collection. Certain artworks are specific to the Chan tradition, but we should remember to study them as part of environments that include art forms that were not exclusive to Chan, but that Chan shared with other Buddhist and non-Buddhist groups in Song and Yuan China.

[225] Cahill 1987.

# Chapter Three
## Abbots and Artists: Assessing Eccentric Painting

To date, the most extensive discussion of artistic representations of Chan eccentrics has been in the context of museum exhibitions. Paintings of the eccentrics have been on display in three major exhibitions in the United States and Europe: "Zen Painting and Calligraphy" held at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1970, "Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings" (Zen: Meister der Meditation in Bilder und Schriften) held at the Rietberg Museum in Zürich in 1993, and "Awakenings: Zen Figure Painting in Medieval Japan" held at the Japan Foundation in New York in 2007. In Japan, an exhibition devoted exclusively to mostly Japanese paintings of Hanshan and Shide was held at the Tochigi Prefectural Museum in 1994. Paintings of eccentrics have also been included in more general exhibitions of Buddhist art, Song painting and national collections.[226]

In the catalogues accompanying these exhibitions, the essays introducing the paintings seek to name and discuss the array of artists involved in every production: the painters as well as the calligraphers, themselves mostly abbots who inscribed the paintings with questions and comments. Catalogue authors identify signatures and seal impressions, and attempt to connect brushwork in both painting and calligraphy to styles frequently found in the Song and Yuan periods.

Simultaneously, the catalogues reveal preferences for certain types of media, images and artists over others. First, none of the essays discusses or even refers to images of eccentrics in materials other than painting. Second, within the group of painted images, there is a predilection for inscribed paintings with seal impressions, and of particular styles. For instance, authors note painting styles as diverse as "apparition painting", a Southern Song style of ghostly pale ink associated with landscape painting in both Chan and literati circles, and styles related to the work of professional painters, using colour. But they discuss many examples of the former, and only one or two of the latter. Research focuses on ink painting, or, more specifically, on the work of *particular* calligraphers and painters, or abbots and artists, and their connections with *particular* styles in Song and Yuan art.

[226] Nezu Institute of Fine Arts 2004, Weidner 1994 and Toyka-Fuong 2003.

The histories and art-historical connections of the Chan abbots and artists under discussion above are indeed intriguing: they are essential for understanding an important aspect of the production of paintings of Chan topics in the Song and the Yuan. But perhaps the most fascinating aspect of these abbots and artists is that their names remain important throughout later valuations of Chan and "Chan art", a trend that can be followed from medieval Japanese receptions of Chan and collections of Chan painting down to the modern-day exhibitions mentioned above.

This chapter argues that although it is necessary to recognize the work of these specific abbots and artists, and despite what might be suggested by their persistent influence, it is essential to be aware that any notions of abbots and artists concerned with Chan eccentric painting refer to groups composed of members whose backgrounds were diverse and whose social positions were often contested in contemporaneous literature. To this extent, especially with regard to the abbots, literature and art left by Song literati reveal a variety of stances towards these leaders of the Song Buddhist world.[227] Similarly, artists of eccentric painting hail from a variety of backgrounds and are judged and categorized variously in art-historical literature of the time.

This chapter starts and ends with a discussion of the encomia, the inscriptions written by Chan abbots on paintings of eccentrics. The first section introduces the encomia, considering issues of their nature and language. Next, I discuss abbots and artists who inscribed and painted portraits of eccentrics. Considering the heterogeneity of these inscribers and painters, I propose to approach portraits of eccentrics thematically, as a subject in Song and Yuan art, rather than as the result of the efforts of a particular type of abbot and artist. This approach allows investigation of other, under-studied artists and their contributions to this theme. I pay particular attention to Song and Yuan literati, who not only contribute to eccentric painting but also reveal, in texts and art, the different kinds of relationships that existed between the Buddhist clergy and other groups in Song and Yuan society. In the final section of this chapter I return to the encomia. Advancing from the discussion of abbots and artists, I show that the encomia assume a new complexity. The tension between these inscriptions and the paintings they complement, and the place of both within the Chan canon describe connections between Chan and art. I argue that the encomia should be seen,

[227] Halperin 2006.

not as emblems of the rather nebulous notion of “Chan art”, but as a method to understand how Chan understands art.

## 1. ENCOMIA ON ECCENTRICS IN CHAN TEXTS AND PAINTINGS

One of the most interesting aspects of Chan eccentric painting is this form of art’s uses of the written word. When viewing eccentric painting, we see the written word first, on a large number of examples, in the form of calligraphic inscriptions by Chan abbots. Calligraphy was a major form of artistic expression for the Chan establishment. In *The Zen Art of Writing*, Helmut Brinker describes how calligraphy, or the art of ‘ink traces’ (*moji* 墨跡) was in essence practiced and understood by Chan abbots in very much the same way as writing was practiced and understood by the (literati) calligraphers of the Song dynasty [228] :

> The declared ambition of Zen masters was to give visible expression to their own true self, following the example of independent literati and aspiring to the ideal of their creed.[229]

Along with painting, poetry and music, calligraphy was a gentleman’s art that revealed the true character of artists, abbots and literati alike. However, Brinker shows that for followers of Chan, the calligraphy of Chan masters also represented “a work of art beyond personal limits”, as Chan writings were also “religious, historical, philosophical, poetic and graphological documents”, a form of “spiritual communication” written by members of the Chan lineage. Seen as aesthetic as well as religious messages, these documents were collected by Chinese and Japanese secular and religious circles.

Brinker provides a list of types of Chan calligraphic documents in Japanese collections. This list includes such varied forms of calligraphy as characters written for wooden boards to be displayed in buildings, personal suggestions and encouraging words for disciples, and “departing verses”, written by masters before their death. While the characters for announcement boards are of a general, philosophical nature, the death verses are very personal expressions that allow insight into the character of particular abbots. For instance, the famous Chinese abbot Yishan Yining 一山一寧

[228] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 99. The term ‘ink traces’ in its specific meaning of calligraphy by Chan masters was first coined by Japanese pilgrim monks traveling to China.
[229] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 100.

(1247-1317), who spent a large part of his later life in Japan and was instrumental in the introduction of Song culture there, reveals a melancholy in his nature in the death verse he wrote:

> I ran wild throughout my life.
> Buddhas and patriarchs grieve at me in silence.
> The arrow has already left the bowstring.
> The void is falling to the ground.[230]

In contrast, the Northern Song master Dahui Zonggao, critical of the notion of death verses, left a rather comical declaration:

> Birth is thus.
> Death is thus.
> Verse or no verse-
> What's the fuss? [231]

In this particular chapter, Brinker does not touch upon calligraphy by Chan masters on paintings, most probably because such paintings were not collected as calligraphic documents per se. In earlier research, however, he does investigate combinations of Chan calligraphy and painting, most prominently through portraits of historical Chan abbots.[232] He argues that these portraits functioned as a confirmation of the ties between Zen masters and their students, through the elements of pictorial likeness and written dedications. Handed down from master to adept, they served as evidence for the succession of the doctrine from teacher to student.

Theodore Griffith Foulk and Robert Sharf present an elaborate counter-argument to Brinker. Their study of portraits of historical abbots leads them to conclude that these portraits were not used in any manner akin to "certificates of enlightenment" handed down from master to student, but had a variety of other functions instead.[233] Without, for now, going into this argument, it is helpful for this section to consider the major source that Foulk and Sharf use for their theory: Chan calligraphy on painting. The authors look at surviving paintings that include calligraphy, as well as another important form of writing associated with Chan

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[230] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 103. Yishan Yining left inscriptions on eccentric painting, too.
[231] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 108.
[232] Brinker; Brinker reiterates his earlier theories in a chapter on "Use and Functions of Zen Painting" in Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 115.
[233] Foulk and Sharf 1993-1994. This article has been published again as a chapter in Faure 2003: 74-151.

painting: texts on paintings written by Chan masters and collected, after their demise, in their *Recorded Sayings*.[234]

One of the earliest recorded sayings to preserve this type of text is the *Recorded Sayings of Yangqi Fanghui* (*Yangqi Fanghui heshang yülu* 楊岐方會和尚語錄).[235] Under the section "autograph portrait eulogies", this text collects the writings of Yangqi Fanghui on portraits of himself, mostly puns in which the abbot makes fun of his own likeness. For instance, in the very first inscription, Yangqi writes:

> A mouth like a beggar's open sack;
> A nose like a shit ladle in the garden!
> This gentleman troubled himself,
> applying his talented brush to the completion of this portrait;
> I entrust it to the world's judgement.[236]

Yangqi's collected inscriptions stand at the beginning of a tradition that, in the following two centuries, becomes enormously popular: already by the late eleventh century, abbots' sayings have hundreds of eulogies attached to them.[237] Also, these eulogies are not only appreciations of their own portraits, but include inscriptions on portraits of pre-Song patriarchs and Song masters, as well as Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhats, and eccentric monks. The inscriptions on these other portraits are generally ordered along the following line: 1. The historical Buddha (often an image of the "Buddha Coming out of the Mountains"), 2. Bodhisattvas (very often Guanyin), 3. Eccentric monks and 4. pre-Song and Song Chan masters.[238] The recorded sayings do not rigidly maintain this order, however, and often appraisals of portraits of patriarchs are found between writings on portraits of eccentrics, and calligraphy on a portrait of the immensely popular wise layman Vimalakīrti (*Weimojie* 維摩詰) may precede an inscription on a portrait of Guanyin. Still, all recorded sayings have in common that inscriptions on portraits other than those of the abbot whose sayings are being

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[234] For more on *Recorded Sayings*, see Chapter One.
[235] T.1994: 47.640.
[236] Foulk and Sharf 1993-1994: 196.
[237] Foulk and Sharf write that later, Japanese editions of recorded sayings ascribe inscriptions to Tang Chan masters as well, based on the Song model—another sign of its popularity.
[238] In a refreshing move, Brinker organizes his discussion of "Themes and Genres of Zen painting" based on the ranking provided in the recorded sayings of Chan master Foyan Qingyuan 佛眼清遠 (1067-1120); Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 131.

recorded, are grouped under the same heading of "eulogies for portraits of the Buddha and the patriarchs", or simply under the heading "appreciations of portraits".

Encomia for portraits of eccentrics follow the pattern set by encomia for portraits of abbots: they steadily increase in number between the late eleventh and the early fourteenth century, with a peak in the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries. Within a period of approximately 200 years, we find at least 160 inscriptions, collected on the surfaces of the paintings themselves, as well as in the recorded sayings. For some abbots, the recorded sayings preserve only one or two appreciations of eccentric painting, while others may have ten to as many as thirty such inscriptions to their names. Additionally, many abbots relate stories of the eccentrics during public assemblies, private interviews and informal conferences, speeches that are all recorded in abbots' sayings, too.

The nature of the encomia for the eccentrics is in many ways similar to that of the encomia for abbots' portraits: both inscriptions describe the figures illustrated and often end with a question. However, unlike inscriptions on abbots' portraits, encomia for eccentrics are always laudatory, and never mock or ridicule. For instance, an inscription by the Chan master Liao'an Qingyu 了庵清欲 (1288-1363) on a painting of the pot-bellied Budai reads:

> A strange light at his finger tip reveals his true form
> Though his belly is large, his eyes are already dazzled
> He wanders to many places visiting families of his own clan
> He tries to push his bag, but it will not budge.[239]

Stephen Allee provides a detailed investigation of the language of Chan encomia, particularly of appreciations of paintings of the eccentric Xianzi.[240] Allee lists all appreciations of paintings of Xianzi: four actually surviving paintings, seventeen records in abbots' sayings and two additional references to depictions of this monk in traditional Chinese sources. He writes that while many of these appreciations contain allusions to the monk's biography, nearly half of them do not. These inscriptions use specialized vocabulary found in particular Chan and Buddhist texts, and sometimes in literature outside Chan circles. Allee considers the term "wave-scooper" (*laobo* 撈波), which, apart from on Xianzi paintings, where it describes this eccentric's tool for

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[239] Levine and Lippit 2007: 100.
[240] Lecture delivered at Princeton in April 2007 and kindly given to me.

scooping up shrimps, appears only in the biography of the Chan master Yantou Quanhuo 巖頭全豁 (828-887), in Chan poems for Yantou, and occasionally in Chan texts, but hardly ever in earlier and contemporary secular literature. Again, the term "to use shrimp for eyes" (*yixia weimu* 以蝦為目) appears in taxonomic discussions of jellyfish, the fourth-century Daoist *Lives of Divine Immortals* (*Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳) by Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343), and in Buddhist and Chan texts, but not in secular literature. In Chan texts, it is hardly used in poetry, except in the inscriptions for Xianzi. This evidence leads Allee to believe that Chan inscribed texts "were intended to provide the basic stuff for intense intellectual focus". The texts served as an intellectual exercise for both calligrapher and viewing public, who would all have to be knowledgeable about Chan history and literature.

Allee's emphasis on the language of Chan encomia is valuable for understanding one aspect of Chan inscribed texts. His evidence corresponds to conclusions of earlier research on the general topic of eccentric painting. Fontein and Hickman summarize these conclusions when they contend that "paintings of Chan eccentrics were probably inscribed, produced and admired by a small coterie".[241]

At the same time, I would argue that it is important to remember that the texts on the paintings were, first and foremost, part of a religious canon and that the broad religious value of all parts of that canon would have been important to society at large. In the canon, the encomia appear in abbots' discourse records, next to texts pronounced in public lectures and private dialogues, and texts recited in prayer and inscribed on temple buildings; as part of the canon, inscriptions on portraits of eccentrics were the object of veneration. Thus, the effect of inscribed paintings, including paintings inscribed with a particular vocabulary, would primarily be to increase the religious significance of this artistic genre.

## 2. CHAN ABBOTS AND THE TRANSMISSION OF ART

Based on the recorded sayings, we can construct a list of at least twenty abbots who inscribed texts on portraits of Chan eccentrics during this theme's most popular period: the turn of the thirteenth century. Perhaps not surprisingly, this is at the same time a list of some of the most illustrious names in Song Chan Buddhism. Many abbots on

[241] Fontein and Hickman 1970: xxxv.

this list were heads of the most prestigious monasteries of the "Five Mountains System". This was a system developed by the Chan establishment to organize and rank official monasteries in the Song dynasty. Its top level consisted of the monasteries in the mountains around the present-day cities of Hangzhou and Ningbo, known as the "Five Mountains": Jingshan, Lingyin, Tiantong, Jingci and Ayuwang.[242] The monasteries on these mountains were great public temples that received imperial recognition, for instance through gifts. Its abbots would be appointed by the government and have political ties and influence.

Abbots such as Wuzhun Shifan 無準師範 (1177-1249) and his disciple Xiyan Liaohui 西巖了慧 (1198-1262), Wumen Huikai 無門慧開 (1183-1260) and Yanqi Guangwen all, at some point in their lives, occupied high positions in these monasteries. Also, many of these abbots were renowned for their artistic and scholarly achievements. For instance, Wumen Huikai, who wrote at least three inscriptions for portraits of eccentrics, is primarily known as the compiler of the *Gateless Barrier* (*Wumenguan* 無門關), the most famous Chan compendium of test cases published in 1228.[243] Again, the abbot Xisou Shaotan, who wrote no less than 35 inscriptions, also compiled and edited the *Eulogies from the Five Houses of the True School* (*Wujia zhenzong zan* 五家真宗贊), published in 1254.[244]

Wumen and Xisou are only two of many Chan abbots who, during the Song and Yuan dynasties, established themselves as culturally innovative and productive figures in Song and Yuan society, on a par with contemporaneous scholar-officials and literati, and often with close ties to them. One of the earliest such abbots to also inscribe portraits of eccentrics was Dahui Zonggao. Dahui reformed Chan religion by bringing changes to the tradition of test cases and general lectures, and he was also a great writer. In 1137 the prime minister appointed him abbot of Jingshan monastery, and among his lay followers, friends and associates were many high-ranking officials. His own life was closely connected to those officials, and when one of them fell out of favour, Dahui too was sent in exile. At the end of his life, he was reinstated, and he

[242] Yü 1982. The "Five Mountain System" was eventually adopted in Japan.
[243] For inscriptions by Wumen Huikai on paintings of eccentrics see ZZK 2-25-3: 261d8-10 and 261d17-262a4.
[244] For Xisou Shaotan's inscriptions on paintings of eccentrics see ZZK 2-27-1: 89c9-d6 and ZZK 2-27-2: 158c1-3, 158d9-12, 158d17-159a7, 159b1-4, 159b13-18, 159c1-3, 159d4-8, 159d12-18, 160a5-7, 160d6-12, 161b1-6, 161b12-162a8, 162a1-12.

was awarded a posthumous imperial title. Dahui is credited with five inscriptions on portraits of eccentrics.

The connections between such giants of Song Chan Buddhism and their scholar-official or literati counterparts is a fascinating topic of research, not least because of the amount of written documentation with allusions to that connection left by both parties. I explore different ways in which the literati class regarded their Chan peers in section three of this chapter.

Another, no less important, connection is that between abbots and (certain types of) painters. Many of the painters most frequently mentioned in modern studies of "Chan art", and consequently known as "Chan painters", were on close terms with Chan abbots of the Hangzhou-Ningbo area.[245] A famous example is Liang Kai, who befriended, among others, the Chan master Beijian Jujian 北磵居簡 (1164-1246), author of at least seven inscriptions on eccentric portraits.[246] Beijian wrote a poem for Liang Kai, which describes his painting technique:

> Liang Kai uses his ink but sparingly, as if it were gold; but when he is getting inebriated, the ink gets even more condensed into dripping wet (ink traces), no matter if he adds his own sounds to this celestial music, or if he remains silent.[247]

Another prolific inscriber of paintings, the abbot Yanqi Guangwen, commented on the work of a group of so-called monk painters, again "Chan painters", who painted themes popular in Chan circles and lived as semi-professional artists. Itakura Masaaki 板倉聖哲 considers Yanqi's discussion of their work in an extensive article in *Southern Song Painting* (*Nansō kaiga* 南宋絵画).[248] Yanqi Guangwen, he writes, is full of praise for paintings in the "apparition style" of light ink. He appreciates the work of the monk painter Zhirong 智融 (1114-1193), who stands at the beginning of this style, and also speaks highly of Zhirong's followers, such as the monk Zhiweng 直翁 (act. 13th century) and the painter Hu Zhifu 胡直夫 (act. 13th century). Finally, the "apparition style" culminates in the work of Muqi Fachang, without doubt the most celebrated "Chan painter". Itakura aims to contrast this style with the style of painters who work in thick ink or precise and rough touches, such as the Song

[245] I will explain my difficulties with the term "Chan painters" below.
[246] For Beijian Jujian's inscriptions on paintings of eccentrics see ZZK 2-26-1 80d10-81a4 and 81a8-9.

academic painter Ma Lin, as well as, perhaps surprisingly, the "Chan painters" Shi Ke and Liang Kai.

Indeed, there are at least three inscriptions of Yanqi on surviving portraits of wandering monks that are all by or attributed to Zhiweng, Hu Zhifu and Muqi, reflecting the abbot's admiration for these artists (Fig. 19).[249] However, while it is perfectly possible that Yanqi preferred a particular type of painting, Itakura's article suggests, again, a confirmation of the concept of a select group of abbots and artists dominating the scene of images of Chan eccentrics. Especially since Yanqi's colophon may also be found on a painting by the artist Li Que, a disciple of Liang Kai, whom Itakura holds to be of the "other" group of painters who worked with thick ink, it seems, for now, more fruitful to explore some of the other information that we can retrieve from Yanqi's comments.[250] Most important at this point is that the name of one of Yanqi's "favoured" artists, Hu Zhifu, is only ever found in the recorded sayings of Chan monks. The abbot Yuansou Xingduan 元叟行端(1254-1341) writes that Hu Zhifu was a follower of Zhirong in an inscription on a painting of an Arhat, and Xisou Shaotan comments on a painting of Hu Zhifu, but otherwise, in contemporaneous and later Chinese painting treatises, he does not feature.[251] This curious fact shows that even if we attempt to construct a category of "Chan painters in pale ink", we need to accommodate a range of artists whose reception histories are diverse in Chinese religion and art. In the wider category of painters of Chan subjects, the case of Hu Zhifu is just one of many examples of variety, a point to which I will return in the sections on these artists.

In addition to Yanqi Guangwen's conception of him, the artist Muqi needs to be mentioned in connection with the illustrious abbot Wuzhun Shifan, with whom he studied for many years. The life and work of Wuzhun Shifan can be seen in the light of a connection with Japan, yet another important aspect of Chan masters in the Song and the Yuan. Particularly, Chan abbots developed personal relations with their

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[247] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 126.
[248] Itakura 2004.
[249] Additionally, six more inscriptions of Yanqi on portraits of eccentrics are collected in his recorded sayings. See ZZK 2-26-2: 151b14-17 (portrait of Budai), 151b17-152a20 (Four Sleepers), 152b3-6 (Zhutou), 152b6-9 (Xianzi), 152b13-16 (Chaoyang), 152b16-18 (Duiyue).
[250] I return to the issue of "contrast" between Muqi and Liang Kai below, in the subsections on painters of eccentric monks.
[251] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996 and Levine and Lippit 2007. Hu Zhifu is only one of a list of painters who are not recorded in the Chinese history of art. Another example is the artist Yintuoluo, who was also an eccentric painter and whose record is only first kept in the famous fifteenth-century Japanese connoisseurs' manual *Kundaikan sayū chōki* 君台觀左右帳記.

Japanese students, which resulted in immediate artistic effects, as well as long-term religious and artistic influences.

Regular contacts between Chinese and Japanese Chan monasteries are already found in the thirteenth century, and these contacts are not limited to monks alone. For example, there was a lively exchange between Chinese and Japanese construction specialists who traveled between the two countries to take part in the building of monastery sites.[252] No fewer than 112 Japanese monks traveled to China in the Southern Song dynasty, while in the fourteenth century, between 1300-1350, this number rose to 200.[253] Often, these Japanese pilgrims were inspired by the Chinese monks and abbots who were also traveling to Japan, sometimes to remain there for good.

Yoshiaki Shimizu's in-depth study of the life and work of the Japanese painter Moku'an Rei'en provides a clear introduction to the activities of Japanese monks in China, and their contacts with Chinese Chan masters and literati.[254] In many cases, these contacts developed into very personal relationships between particular abbots and their Japanese disciples, with immediate artistic implications. For instance, the Japanese monk Enni Ben'en 圓爾辯圓 (1202-1280) became the favourite disciple of Wuzhun Shifan. Enni spent six years in China, and upon his return to Japan in 1241, Wuzhun provided him with, among other things, a lineage chart that described the sequence of Chan patriarchs ending with Wuzhun and Enni, as well as a portrait of himself, inscribed with the following poem:

> The Great Song Empire and the Japanese Empire---
> Heaven is without boundaries and earth has no poles.
> With one sentence he settles a thousand errors.
> Is there anyone else who can distinguish between wrong and right?
> He startles the worm with the white forehead from Nanshan
> So that an exceedingly clear breeze makes him grow feathers and wings.
> The honourable elder of Kunō in Japan had this illusory image of myself painted and asked me for an inscription.[255]

Brinker writes that the poem is a "general appreciation of the promulgation of Zen" as well as a very personal message: Wuzhun (the 'worm with the white forehead' (*bai'echong* 白額蟲—a self-pejorative epithet found often in Daoist writings) is

[252] Soper 1942 in Brinker and Kanazawa 1996.
[253] Wey 1974 and Shimizu 1974.
[254] Shimizu 1974.
[255] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 162.

deeply impressed by the insights of his guest student.[256] Wuzhun and Enni remained in contact: Enni sent his teacher timber from Fukuoka to support the reconstruction of a Jingshan temple, while Wuzhun sent him calligraphy that Enni used for the signboards of his monastery.[257]

Another, special relationship between a Chinese abbot and Japanese monk resulted in such exceptional artistic expression that it merits brief mention here. It concerns the Japanese monk Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純 (1394-1481), well known for his unconventional lifestyle. Born as an illegitimate son of the Imperial family, Ikkyū was sent into a monastery when he was only five years old. A student of severely ascetic masters, Ikkyū revolted against the clergy and lived the life of a wandering monk. He returned to Kyoto only in his later years when he was appointed abbot, but even then his behaviour was uncommon: his passion for the blind singer Mori resulted in portraits of the abbot and his lover shown together, as well as a series of erotic poems that he wrote for her. Ikkyū also had a strong admiration for the Jingshan master Xutang Zhiyu 虛堂智愚 (1185-1269), and, most intriguingly, inscribed a series of portraits of himself as Xutang. Although Ikkyū never went to China, he considered himself a reincarnation of Xutang and his artistic productions reveal the intensity with which he sought to express and preserve that connection.

In addition to the immediate artistic implications of the relations between individual Chinese and Japanese abbots and monks, it is also crucial to be aware of the larger religious and artistic trends influenced by these connections. Wuzhun and Enni are a case in point. Their friendship and admiration for each other strongly influenced Japanese Zen, where Wuzhun is held as one of the most important Chan masters. Particularly interesting is the fact that Enni was a fellow student of the painter Muqi, whose work he collected and took with him to Japan. Subsequent Japanese reverence for Muqi has been constant since medieval times, a phenomenon discussed in the section below.

## 3. THE "CHAN PAINTERS"

### *Early "Chan painters"*

[256] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 162.
[257] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 62. Wuzhun's letter of thanks is kept in the Tokyo National Museum.

Modern investigations of “Chan art” almost automatically entail a discussion of “Chan artists”. “The Chan artist” is generally a monk painter of Buddhist themes whose performative brushwork and sparse use of black ink reveal an innovative expressiveness, preferably veering towards madness. This category encompasses both landscape and figure painters. I discuss only the latter here.

One of the first painters eligible for nomination in this category was Guanxiu, a Chan monk from present-day Zhejiang province who is also credited as the artist of two extant paintings of eccentrics. As noted previously, according to Fontein and Hickman, Guanxiu was the first artist to “emerge from the Chan milieu” and his work “stands at the birth of Chan art”. Indeed, Guanxiu’s Arhats, his best-known painting subjects, are allegedly of a violently imaginative character. The *Yizhou minghua lu*, a record of artists of the region of Shu (present day Sichuan province) written before 1005 notes that

> His Sixteen Luohans [Arhats] had bushy eyebrows, large eyes, hanging cheeks and high noses. When someone asked where he had seen such men, he answered ‘in my dream’.[258]

Guanxiu’s formula for painting Arhats became a standard that Song and Yuan painters of Arhats could not ignore. Also, his use of fluent black ink in a style that came to be known as ‘broken ink’ (*pomo*) was followed by many later artists. Still, Guanxiu used “broken ink” for only some of his paintings while many others were done in ink and colour, a style not usually associated with Chan.

A second notable individual for this early phase of “Chan art” is the artist Shi Ke. According to the *Huapin* by Li Jian

> Shi Ke was a highly independent character; always mocking and making fun of his contemporaries. His manner of painting was bold and free and he had no consideration for rules and patterns. That is why his figures sometimes are so hideously strange and queer. He painted some of the officials of the Water Palace with crabs and fishes attached to their belts in order to shock the people who looked at them. I have just seen a picture of him, of an old man and woman tasting vinegar; they are holding their noses and squeezing their mouths to show its bitterness.[259]

Shi Ke also preferred grotesque shapes and forms, and he painted in the broken-ink style, as can be seen in his portrait of Fenggan in the Tokyo National Museum. In fact,

[258] Sirén 1956-1958: 155.
[259] Sirén 1956-1958: 163.

the Northern Song Imperial collection of paintings (*Xuanhe huapu*) that owned some of Shi Ke's works, actually calls him an eccentric. Still, Shi Ke's lifestory is very different from that of Guanxiu. Not only was he a layman, he had also received literary education and was even appointed at the Imperial Academy of Painting ---a position that he eventually did not accept. Also, his artistic subjects covered a wide range of Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist themes.

Several centuries later, the same holds for Liang Kai. This artist painted portraits of ancient philosophers, artists and poets such as TaoYuanming 陶淵明 (365-427), Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (309-c. 365), Li Bai and Meng Haoran 孟浩然, as well as Arhats, Chan patriarchs and eccentric monks. Additionally, his style changed over time. During his early years at the Song Academy, he painted in a manner not unlike that of the artist Li Gonglin, who used great refinement and details (the 'outline drawing'---*baimiao*--- style).[260] Apparently, he also drew inspiration from the Tang painter Wu Daozi for his design of "grotesque figures in wavy and whirling mantle folds". While it is impossible to organize Liang Kai's work chronologically, it is generally assumed that he developed his highly individual style of abrupt, impulsive and impressionistic brushwork only after he left the Academy to pursue a wandering life in the Chan monasteries in the capital's mountains.

In the art of some of Liang Kai's contemporaries and followers, we can detect stylistic similarities. The painter Li Que, who according to the 1365 *Treasure Mirror of Painting* (*Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑑) studied "Liang Kai's painting on white", follows this artist's 'abbreviating brush technique' (*jianbi*) in his ink paintings and portraits of Fenggan and Budai.[261] Not much is known about Li Que. He is sometimes identified with the artist Li Quan, who studied at the Imperial Academy between 1265 and 1274, but a painter named Li Que might also have been an actual student of Liang Kai.

There is likewise little biographical information on Muqi, the "Chan painter" *par excellence*, and fellow monk painters such as Luochuang, who also painted eccentric monks. Osvald Sirén ventures that Muqi must have lived between 1210 and 1275 and that after studying with Wuzhun, he established his own temple, the Liutongsi.[262] Already during the artist's lifetime, Muqi's work became popular in

[260] Sirén 1956-1958: 134. See also Kawakami, Toda and Ebine 1975.
[261] Kawakami, Toda and Ebine 1975.
[262] Sirén 1956-1958: 138. See also Toda 1973 and Wey 1974.

Japan. Collected by the Ashikaga shōguns, his most important paintings eventually became part of the main temple of the Daitokuji in Kyoto. Muqi occupies a fundamental position in traditional and contemporary Japanese art history. Medieval artists such as Moku'an Rei'en, Sesson Shūkei (c. 1504-c. 1589) and Ōsai (act. late 15th century) were all compared to him or inspired by him, while in the modern period an entire volume of the *Compendium of the Art of Ink Painting* (*Suiboku bijutsu taikei* 水墨美術大系) is devoted to Muqi and his fellow monk painter Yujian.[263] Also, recent Japanese research still discusses issues of Muqi's style and themes.[264]

The Japanese fascination with Muqi is intriguing, not only because it describes a complex phenomenon in the art history of that country, but also because it continues to dominate artistic valuation in discussions of "Chan art" outside Japan. Remarkably, however, the Japanese tradition of unswerving admiration for Muqi and his fellow "Chan painters" knows no match in any of the traditional or modern Chinese art-historical treatises. In fact, traditional Chinese art-historical texts do not even make note of a category of "monk painters", let alone "Chan painters". The "Chan painters" that are discussed are often judged in terms that hardly reflect appreciation. Well known are these comments on Muqi's work in the *Treasure Mirror of Painting*:

> His way of painting was coarse and ugly, not in accordance with the ancient rules, nor for refined enjoyment.[265]

This treatise reiterates earlier comments by Zhuang Su and Tang Hou, authors of the *Supplement to "Painting" Continued* (1298) and *Criticisms of Past and Present Painting* (1328) respectively, which say:

> His paintings truly are not elegant amusements, but only suitable to assist in the pure seclusion of Buddhist quarters and Daoist dwellings.[266]

> He played with ink in a rough and vulgar manner and did not follow the rules of the ancients.[267]

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[263] Toda 1973. The following volume of this series is dedicated to Liang Kai and Yintuoluo. It is impossible to find a Chinese counterpart for a study of this type, dedicated entirely to "Chan painters", although a beginning for this may be found in Si Jia's article on monk painters ---see Si 1995.
[264] See for instance Ogawa 1999.
[265] Sirén 1956-1958: 138.
[266] Weidner 1994: 422.
[267] Sirén 1956-1958: 138. Interestingly, Ogawa's research is an attempt to counter the negative valuation of Muqi in traditional Chinese art history. Thus, Ogawa seems to continue the traditional Japanese take on the issue, see Ogawa 1999.

Apart from the issue of the reception of Muqi, there is the problem of the authenticity of his art. Many of the paintings attributed to him are now considered to be copies by anonymous artists rather than done by the master himself.[268] This questions processes of collection and valuation in medieval and modern periods. What was, and is the value of authenticity? How important were style and subject matter, quite aside from the identity of the artist?

Two hanging scrolls showing Fenggan and his tiger as well as Hanshan and Shide currently in the MOA in Atami and discussed in Chapter Two, illustrate this problem practically. These scrolls do not contain any calligraphy or seal inscriptions, but have three separate records attached to them by three Japanese medieval experts: a connoisseur and two members of the famous Kanō school of painting. All three authors confirm, again and again, that the scrolls were painted by Liang Kai, even though the paintings do not show any artistic similarities to any of the other surviving paintings of this theme attributed to that artist.

The records attached to these "Liang Kai" paintings are hardly unique: there are several surviving examples of portraits of eccentrics that are accompanied by texts, and even images. The Kyoto National Museum for instance holds a painting of Fenggan, Hanshan, Shide and the tiger by Yintuoluo that comes along with a smaller copy of the same painting made by the famous artist Kanō Tan'yū 狩野探幽 (1602-1679) with, again, a confirmation that this is a real Yintuoluo. Such repeated confirmation has a contradictory effect: it demonstrates uncertainties of attribution and it indicates that viewing and collecting art are social constructs, as much as they are quests for authenticity. I return to this point in Chapter Five.

### *Yan Hui and "Chan painting" in the Yuan*

In *Figure Painting and Ch' an Priest painters in the Late Yuan*, Toda Teisuke focuses on the life and work of the artist Yan Hui, one of the last Chinese "Chan painters".[269] This research is important because it directly addresses the issue of the "Chan painter". A "Chan amateur painter", Toda contends, would logically speaking have to be a

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[268] Wey 1974, Cahill 1997 and Toda 1973.

[269] Toda 1972. Interestingly, Toda notes that he started his investigations after viewing some Japanese Kano school copies of Yan Hui's art.

Chan priest. Yet, since the Southern Song, professional artists had been painting works specifically for Chan temples. These artists could handle paintings in colour and pure ink, depending on temples' requirements.

Yan Hui was a professional artist, too. However, Yan Hui's work differed from earlier professional painters in that he varied his style according to subject matter. Toda compares Yan Hui's paintings of the Daoist deities Xiama 蝦蟇 and Tieguai 鉄拐 (Fig. 20) with the same artist's *Hanshan and Shide* and finds "considerable technical differences" that correspond to the respectively Daoist and Chan nature of the subjects. He does not consider Yan Hui a "Chan painter", but "a professional painter who borrowed from the theme and style of Chan painting". According to Toda, Yan Hui stands at an important moment in the history of Chinese art when a confusion arises between "Chan amateur painting and other religious figure painting":

> However, during the later Yuan, the clear distinction that had existed between ink paintings and those in colour gradually dissolved. Clearly, in the Southern Song this separation was one between Chan amateur paintings and the professional Buddhist and Daoist paintings in colour, both of which Chan temples had actively supported. In the course of time, this gap in expressive distinctiveness rapidly closed; and Zen amateur painting, which had been the leading spirit in the Southern Song period, gradually lost its isolated position. As a result, the professional painter took over the tools of the Chan amateurs, together with their specialized themes, mixing it all into a grand pot-pourri of styles.[270]

Chan priest-officials not only recognized this "state of growing confusion", they may have copied the styles and techniques of these professional painters in their own artistic productions.[271] Therefore

> The force behind the development of early Japanese ink painting was certainly that of the Chan priests. However, the form which they brought from China was by no means unique to the Chan school. On the contrary, it was a form strongly reflecting Chinese popular painting.[272]

Toda's work is refreshing in that it steps away from the traditional, and present-day, categorization of artists, at least for the Yuan dynasty. However, unfortunately, he

[270] Toda 1972: 396-397.
[271] Toda does not explain what he means by "Chan priest-officials", but he seems to refer to anonymous monk painters.
[272] Toda 1972: 400.

does not fully answer the most important question that he himself raises: "does it really make any difference whether these artists were priests or professionals?"[273] For the Southern Song, Toda still distinguishes a category of Chan amateur painters who paint in pure ink as opposed to professional painters, who use colour. Perhaps not surprisingly, to illustrate the former, he discusses a work by Muqi.

Understanding painting based on distinct categories of artists is common practice in the art history of China. Traditional art-historical treatises, introduced in Chapter Two, use artist-based approaches. Modern attempts to reorganize Chinese art history often counter that approach with still other, artist-based approaches. One example is Si Jia's 思嘉 recent article *On Monk Painters of the Tang, Five Dynasties, the Song and the Yuan and their Contributions to the History of Painting* (*Lun Tang Wudai Song Yuan de huaseng ji qi dui huihuashi zhi gongxian* 论唐五代宋元的画僧及其对绘画史之贡献).[274] Si states that since the Tang dynasty, monk painters contributed greatly to aspects of Chinese culture. Not only did they aid the spread of Buddhism within and outside China, particularly through contacts with Japan, but they were also active in every field of painting to which they brought new ideas and influences which were copied by many later artists. Still, Si laments, most modern scholars discuss only three groups of Chinese painters: the literati, the academy painters and the artisans. For early and medieval Chinese painting, monk painters are hardly discussed as a separate group; only for the late Ming and Qing dynasties do scholars seriously consider this group, for instance through discussions of illustrious figures such as Bada Shanren 八大山人(1626-1705). Si next lists the names of major monk painters for each dynasty, and divides them into the categories of landscape and figural art, in a fashion not unlike traditional Chinese texts. Guanxiu and Muqi feature prominently on this list, while Liang Kai and Yan Hui, of course, do not.

Shimada Shūjirō also provides an interesting restructuring of traditional texts.[275] His focus is on the 'untrammeled' (*yipin*) style of painting. As discussed in Chapter Two, the term *yipin* was first coined in the late Tang dynasty by Zhu Jingxuan, author of the *Record of Famous Painters of the Tang Dynasty*. Artists of the *yipin* category were known for their abbreviated brushwork and practice of "spattered ink". These painters did not depend on the "bone method" of using the brush, part of

[273] Toda 1972: 399.
[274] Si 1995.
[275] Shimada 1961, 1962 and 1964.

Xie He's famous *Six Laws*, or on outlines, but painted spontaneously to "enrich the pictorial significance of ink".

Shimada describes how in the Song dynasty, *yipin* changed from a concept of style to a concept of value. Song art history demonstrates an ambiguity towards the position of *yipin* in the established classification scale of "capable", "excellent" and "inspired". According to some sources, *yipin* is a "permissible exception from orthodoxy" and thus a class outside the three main categories. However, the Huizong emperor, one of the best-known artists and art collectors in Chinese Imperial history, placed *yipin* below the "inspired" category, thereby incorporating the concept as a part of the system of traditional painting. Simultaneously, it became much more difficult to assign artists to this category. This is clear from contemporaneous, contradictory assessments of Shi Ke. As noted earlier, Shi Ke was classified as an eccentric by the authors of the catalogue of the Song Imperial Collection *Xuanhe huapu*. Similarly, Guo Ruoxu, the author of *An Account of My Experiences in Painting* published in 1080, writes of Shi Ke:

> The people of his time were deeply struck by the strangeness and heedlessness of his untrammeled brushwork.[276]

However Deng Chun, who wrote the 1167 *Notes on Paintings*, a sequel to Guo's work, finds that

> There are many who aim for *yipin*, such as Shi Ke and Guanxiu, but they end up being rustic.[277]

While Shimada recognizes that Shi Ke might have changed his style according to the nature of his subject, he argues that "it was nevertheless the *yipin* style which determined his unique art-historical position".[278] However, what is even more interesting is that Shimada next traces the development of the *yipin* style through a discussion of the work of a series of painters who are not traditionally classified as belonging to this category. Based on *yipin*'s definition as "rough brushwork", he finds that a wide range of artists including the landscapists Jing Hao 荊浩 (late 9th-early 10th century) and Dong Yuan 董源 (d. 962), the literatus Mi Fu and the bird and

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276 Shimada 1962: 130.
277 Shimada 1961: 74.
278 Shimada's research of Shi Ke here matches Toda's opinion on varieties in Yan Hui's style: both artists changed styles according to subject matter.

flower painter Xu Xi 徐熙 (d. before 975) all practised some or other form of *yipin*. To this mixed group he adds "the Chan school", "another school that inherited the *yipin* style", and he provides us with the example of Muqi. Strikingly, Shimada notes, while the work of Muqi and his literati counterparts are both influenced by *yipin*, the latter generally has no appreciative remarks for the former.

Shimada's attempt to reorganize Chinese painting based on the concept of *yipin* is courageous. Yet, this method seems unable to fundamentally transform traditional categorization. It still recognizes distinctions between literati artists, landscapists, bird and flower painters and the "Chan school"---a "school" that Shimada does not further define. Shimada's main purpose is to understand how each of these categories translate *yipin* into different varieties of art, rather than how *yipin* may have united these different artists, or at least softened the demarcation between them. Similarly, Si Jia's study of monk painters is an interesting description of these artists' innovations and contributions, but, by designing yet another category of painters, Si does not take into account the complexities of the Chinese painting world, where artists from all kinds of backgrounds could work on different themes in different styles, and art productions could be the result of cooperation between all these different people and elements, rather than isolated efforts of individuals. In fact, Si's description of the Northern Song monk painter Miaoshan 妙善 is a telling example. Miaoshan received an imperial order to make a portrait of the emperor. When the portrait was finished, Su Shi, without doubt the most famous Northern Song literatus, extolled the portrait in a colophon. This whole event was subsequently recorded in the art-historical treatise *"Painting" Continued*, demonstrating the collaboration of social groups and concepts that are traditionally held to be distinct, on the same artistic theme.

The above discussion of "Chan painters" has shown that it is impossible to define such a category. The lives, artistic styles and painting subjects of the most important artists of this category are simply too diverse. If we expand the term "Chan painter" to include all artists of themes popular in the Chan establishment, we encounter an even greater diversity. Applying instead a thematic approach to the subject of art for the Chan establishment and portraits of eccentrics, leads to results

that do more justice to the rich world of Song painting, and Song Chan Buddhism.[279] It allows investigation of under-studied artists, and research of under-studied aspects of well-known artists.[280] Combined, these new perspectives contribute to the revaluation of the Chan eccentrics and their role within Chan.

### PAINTERS OF CHAN ECCENTRICS

The first group of painters whose work becomes important in a thematic approach is the group of anonymous painters of Chan eccentrics. There are at least eighteen surviving paintings by anonymous artists: these paintings do not contain any artists' seal impressions or signatures and cannot stylistically be attributed to any named painter. Some paintings contain abbots' seal impressions and colophons, but many of them do not. There are also nine extant portraits whose authenticity is questionable: they are, sometimes traditionally, attributed to certain artists but this is continuously subject to revision. One example is a *Hanshan and Shide* currently in the British Museum, London. Originally attributed to the Ming painter Wang Wen 王問 (1497-1576), this painting is now considered to be a nineteenth-century copy. It has been mentioned that scholars question the authenticity of many paintings still attributed to Muqi, so these paintings as well other Song and Yuan illustrations of the same theme could be subjected to revaluation, too.

The best indication of the possible number of anonymous paintings of Chan eccentrics is provided by the encomia in Chan discourse records. In their appreciations of portraits of eccentrics, abbots never record the name of the artists. None of the "Chan painters" are named, and even such artists whose names are only known through abbots' encomia, such as the aforementioned Hu Zhifu, are known through their paintings of other subjects, in this case Arhats.[281]

Some of the encomia on surviving paintings correspond exactly with the texts collected in the discourse records; these inscriptions can actually be connected to particular artists and paintings. Probably, this could have been done for many other inscriptions collected in the Chan texts as well, were it not that the paintings did not

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[279] In fact, some traditional art-historical texts do employ a thematic organization. See for instance the *Xuanhe huapu*. Also, Chan discourse records organize the section on appreciations of paintings thematically, mentioning artists only rarely. I return to this point below.
[280] Currently, this type of research is gaining more importance, and with fruitful results. See for instance Maggie Bickford's study of plum paintings (Bickford 1985).
[281] This is an important point, to which I return later.

survive. However, considering the huge amount of at least 160-200 eulogies for portraits of eccentrics, it is only logical to assume that a large number of these portraits would have been made by painters who did not sign their work.

Painters who do not autograph their work are silent, but this does not mean that they have nothing to say. This was probably a varied group: it could have included monks of all levels as well as laymen or even named artists who wished to remain unknown or had no motive to publicize their names. The quiet yet strong presence of this group highlights a two-way development. On the one hand it demonstrates a wider understanding of the theme of the Chan eccentric, not limited to a small "coterie", on the other hand it shows how abbots could have had such paintings made not just by close, acknowledged artists, but by new, unfamiliar painters as well.

A second group of understudied painters of eccentrics that merits mention here is the group of Japanese monk painters in Song and Yuan China. In the history of art of Japan, many of these monk painters have been widely discussed, in traditional art-historical treatises as well as modern research. In particular, scholars pay attention to their translation of themes and styles of Chinese painting, and to their influence on later Japanese artists. However, the contributions of these Japanese monks and painters to China, Chinese art and Chinese Chan have been severely neglected. Hundreds of Japanese monks travelled to Song and Yuan China; some remained in China for the rest of their lives, while others returned to Japan but kept in touch with their Chinese teachers and fellow students, a strong indication of a two-way exchange. In China, many Japanese monks participated in activities in Chan monasteries, including the compilation of texts such as discourse records and the production of art, such as paintings of eccentrics.

A prime example is the monk Moku'an Rei'en, subject of a study by Yoshiaki Shimizu and painter of at least two portraits of eccentrics.[282] Traditional Japanese art-historical treatises, such as the *Kundaikan sayū chōki* 君台観左右帳記, a fifteenth-century connoisseurs' manual, provide several biographies for Moku'an. Shimizu follows the notes provided in the discourse record of the abbot Chushi Fanqi 楚石梵琦 (1296-1370), and a 1388 Japanese collection of poems of Song and Yuan Chan

[282] Shimizu 1974.

priests by the monk Gidō Shūshin 義堂周信 (1325-1388). This anthology describes how Dompu Zenkai, a friend of Gidō, comes to visit him and talks about Moku'an:

> Moku'an's original name was Ze'itsu. He later changed it to this name when he was trained under the priest Kenzan. He went to China and attained the rank of Tripitaka Keeper at Benjuesi under Liao'an Qingyu. It was this Moku'an who cut the blocks for publication of the sequel to Gulin's discourse records, for the funding of which he sold sandals. Later he was at Chengtiansi, under Shishuo Nanchu, attaining the position of primate. Shortly after that he died. Earlier, while he was at the monastery of Jingcisi, he visited Liutongsi on West Lake, where Muqi's disciple resided. The head of the temple "so-and-so" received Moku'an and smilingly told him of the dream he had the night before, in which Muqi, the founding priest of the temple appeared. "So-and-so" the head of the temple told Moku'an 'You are the reincarnation of Muqi'. And thus to Moku'an were passed on two seals of Muqi; one red and the other one white, one relief, the other intaglio. Thus his contemporaries called Moku'an the reincarnation of Muqi.[283]

Shimizu shows how Dompu's story binds Moku'an and Muqi through the same spiritual lineage, and painting. First, Moku'an's Japanese master Kenzan was a student of Wuzhun Shifan, as well as a fellow student of Muqi. Second, the transmission of Muqi's seals establishes a physical connection between the two painters, using an art object.

Equally interesting is Moku'an's life in China. According to Dompu, he occupied several positions in Chinese monasteries. This was hardly unique: Dompu himself functioned as a Tripitaka Keeper for the abbot Liao'an Qingyu when he was in China, and two contemporaries of Moku'an, Tesshū Tokusai 鐵舟德濟 (d. 1366) and Yuzan Shisui (1301-1370), held offices at Chengtiansi. The names of all four Japanese monks are recorded in the discourse records of Chinese abbots: the abbots wrote encomia and farewell poems dedicated to their disciples.

Moku'an occupied himself with pious activities that involved not just Chan monasteries, but the outside world, too: in order to fund the production of the abbot Gulin Qingmao's 古林清茂 (1262-1329) discourse records, he sold sandals. Similarly, just before he left for Japan in 1344, Yuzan's Japanese discourse records reveal that he delivered a sermon at Chengtiansi.[284] As for Moku'an as an eccentric painter, his portraits of Budai and the four sleepers were inscribed by Liao'an Qingyu and a certain Shaomi 紹密 of Xiangfu monastery respectively (Fig. 21). While Liao'an was

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[283] Shimizu 1974: 65.
[284] Shimizu 1974: 80.

a famous abbot, not much is known of Shaomi. Still, this indicates the variety of contacts that Moku'an must have had in China, contacts which must have resulted in mutual influences.

Another well-known Japanese painter of Chinese Chan eccentrics and a contemporary of Moku'an is Kaō Sōnen 可翁宗然 (act. first half of the fourteenth century). Kaō spent seven years in China, during which he studied with such renowned Chan masters and artists as Gulin Qingmao and Zhongfeng Mingben.[285] Kaō too is said to be influenced by Muqi, although, perhaps due to Kaō's shorter stay in China, this influence affected him differently than it did Moku'an.[286] If Kaō was in any way influenced by Muqi, it does not seem too far-fetched to assume that Kaō might have influenced his Chinese contemporaries, too.

Among the Chinese painters of Chan eccentrics, there are two more groups whose contributions to this type of art are yet to be studied. The first group is that of the Song Academy painters. At least two surviving portraits, one of Hanshan and Shide, the other of Budai, are attributed to Ma Lin and Ma Kui respectively, both members of this academy. A third portrait of Budai was also attributed to Ma Kui, but this attribution is now regarded as mistaken.

The Song Academy, officially founded in 984, was a semi-bureaucratic institution attached to the Song court. The Academy was modeled on similar institutions in the Five Dynasties period, and offered positions to accomplished and aspiring artists. Particularly during the reign of the Huizong emperor, who was an artist and an art lover himself, the academy flourished, although it continued to exist until 1350.

Modern scholarship writes about the Song Academy as if it were a coherent organization with some kind of standard form of practice. For instance, Rawson has argued that "the court academy fostered the ambition of the scholar-artists to free painting from the stigma of its being a minor craft skill, which in turn promoted the development of so-called literati painting".[287] However, our knowledge of this institution and the working practices of its members is actually very fragmentary. Some authors have raised the question of whether this academy existed at all.[288]

[285] Zhongfeng Mingben was an exceptional calligrapher ---see Lauer 2002.
[286] Levine and Lippit 2007: 116.
[287] Rawson 1992: 353.
[288] Pang 2005 and 2007.

Ma Lin and his uncle Ma Kui belonged to a family of artists who, for at least five generations, were painters at court. Ma Lin's father Ma Yuan 馬遠 (act. 1190-after 1225) is considered to be one of the founders of the so-called "Ma-Xia school of painting". Again, this was not an actual school, but a tradition of primarily landscapes that made innovative use of ink washes to describe effects of light and mist, and that employed a composition that confined objects to a corner of the painted surface, a method that resulted in an overall lyrical mood in painting. The Ma family is not primarily known for productions of figural art, and there are doubts concerning the authenticity of the attributions of the Ma Lin painting and one Ma Kui painting.[289] Still, this is not necessarily a negative result. If these paintings are by Ma Lin and Ma Kui, they are evidence of an interest in the eccentrics from yet another angle. If they are not by the Ma uncle and nephew, it would be at least rewarding to research the significance of the attributions. The involvement of the Ma family with this type of painting could demonstrate a continuous court interest in the eccentrics, an interest that could have started with the collection of the work of the artist Shi Ke in the early Northern Song. In fact, it would perfectly agree with textual evidence for Southern Song emperors' interest in the eccentrics: the 1197 Chan text *Glorious Events in Chan Monasteries* (*Daorong conglin shengshi*) records that both Emperor Gaozong and Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 (r. 1162-1189) wrote poems for the monk Budai.[290] Finally, if the Song Academy itself was not a coherent organization, as has been proposed, this would only add to the complexities that the Song art world seems to display. Painters such as Ma Lin and Ma Kui could then be seen as working in even closer collaboration with painters from other kinds of backgrounds with regard to style and theme, with the result of mutual influence.

The last group of artists whose involvement with eccentric painting deserves further investigation is the Song literati. Mark Halperin offers a comprehensive study of the intricate relationship between the literati and the Buddhist establishment in the Song dynasty, which I will discuss in more detail below.[291] For the moment, it is valuable to consider the most famous literati painter of Buddhist themes, Li Gonglin, and his literati friends and critics. Li Gonglin was a court official, poet and painter of the Northern Song dynasty. Li spent his life in different regions of the Song empire,

[289] Cahill and Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 139.
[290] Shimizu 1974:
[291] Halperin 2006.

but remained attached to the area where he grew up, the Longmian mountains in present-day Anhui province.[292] Here, he was in touch with several Chan abbots, and he paid regular visits to their monasteries. Pan An-yi describes the variety of abbots that Li was acquainted with, many of whom were poets and writers, too.[293] Pan argues that during literary gatherings with these monks, Li, a talented portraitist, would probably have illustrated stories, or painted likenesses of leading figures in discussions.

Li occupies a vital position in the art of early Song China as his painting style combines the styles of several previous masters, rather than just one. He followed both Gu Kaizhi in his fine, linear style of "outline drawing" and Wu Daozi's short, fluctuating brushwork. Richard Barnhart shows how this "return to the past" was not simply a question of imitation: Li transmitted a style of individual expression that described, in its illustration of figures, "bonds of encounter and interrelationships" not seen in figural art before.[294] Two paintings of eccentrics are attributed to Li Gonglin. The first is a hanging scroll of Budai, currently in the Idemitsu Museum of Arts (Fig. 18). The second attributed painting is unfortunately no longer extant. This attribution is found in the aforementioned *Kundaikan sayū chōki*; it describes a *Hanshan and Shide* in the collection of the Ashikaga shōguns.

A celebrated artist, Li Gonglin was also a member of the circle of friends of the famous statesman and poet Su Shi. In fact, some of Li's most important critics were part of this literati group. For instance Mi Fu, an official and a calligrapher who also regarded himself as a figure painter, was quite dissatisfied with Li's work, which he found to be full of "Wu Daozi mannerisms".[295] In contrast, Su Shi and Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105) admired him.

Su Shi inscribed a painting of Budai by Cui Bo 崔白 (act. mid-11th century) and another by a certain Cang Zhen 藏真.[296] In addition, Su himself painted a portrait of Budai which was inscribed with a poem by the Chan abbot Juefan Huihong 覺範惠洪 (1078-1128). These appreciations would logically follow from the connection that can almost immediately be made between Su's literati theories and aspects of the

[292] Li remembers Longmian in many of his poems and he is actually also known as Li Longmian.
[293] Pan 1997.
[294] Barnhart 1972.
[295] Barnhart 1972.
[296] I return to Cui Bo's painting of Budai in the next chapter.

concept of the wandering saint. The exodus of officials in the early Song dynasty, including, and especially, officials in Su Shi's circle, is well known. Dissatisfied with the ways of the Song government, Su Shi and many others with him went into exile and lived in reclusion, in accord with a tradition of reclusion already present in China and discussed in Chapter One. Scholarship connects several forms of art to this development. One example is the famous series of paintings *Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang* (*Xiao Xiang bajing* 瀟湘八景), which became popular in the Song period. Some of the paintings of this series are painted by monk painters, while others, done by literati, show them in recluse.[297] The lives and thoughts of eccentric monks and wandering saints, who refused to conform to society in pursuit of a higher truth would have appealed immensely to these literati away from office. However, textual and visual evidence for the complexity of the relationship between literati and the Buddhist establishment demands that we look at this issue in more than one way, a point I will consider further below.

## 4. LITERATI ON BUDDHISM: IMAGE, TEXT AND CALLIGRAPHY

### *A Chan monk in a painting of a gathering of eminent men*

In the Yuan dynasty, the artist and official at court Zhao Mengfu painted a gathering of eminent men (Fig. 22). This gathering was supposed to have taken place in 1087 in the garden of the Song prince Wang Shen 王詵 (1036-after 1089). The painting describes a collection of illustrious Northern Song figures, including Su Shi, his brother Su Che 蘇轍 (1039-1112), Huang Tingjian, Li Gonglin and Mi Fu. The men have been divided into small groups, and are occupying themselves with poetry, painting, music and the viewing of art objects, such as bronze vessels.

Zhao Mengfu's painting is one of many paintings of this theme, known as the "Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden". Ellen Johnston Laing has collected all the different versions, and notes that some 47 depictions of this gathering are known through records only, and that another 37 paintings are extant.[298] Laing doubts

[297] Murck 2000: 228-258.
[298] Laing 1968. In fact, the earliest illustration is recorded to have been made by one of the attending guests, Li Gonglin.

whether the gathering ever actually took place, and believes the illustration to reflect a kind of nostalgia: "an imaginary and ideal meeting of the cultural paragons of a bygone era". She shows that some of the men depicted could not have been present in the Northern Song capital in 1087, and that most importantly, "none of the 'biographical chronologies' (*nianpu*) written before the nineteenth century mentions a gathering of sixteen men in the year 1087 or any other year". Mi Fu is held to have recorded the event in writing, but Laing finds that work to be spurious. Also, the identities of the participants differ from record to record.

Whether or not the gathering actually took place, the identity of one particular guest and his placement in the garden is of interest. At the top left hand corner of the Zhao Mengfu painting, a little isolated from the rest of the group, we detect a Buddhist monk in the company of a layman. This monk has been identified as the "Chan master Xiu".

Robert Gimello provides a detailed discussion of Zhao Mengfu's painting and master Xiu's role in it, in order to show how the Buddhist way was implemented historically in China.[299] Xiu, or Chan master Faxiu 法秀 (1027-1090) was a well known, erudite monk, connected to influential figures in the Northern Song capital. In the 1070s and the 1080s, he corresponded with both Su Shi and Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086), men who were politically each other's opponents, and in 1084 he received the title of Yuantong 圓通 from the Song Emperor.

According to Gimello, the placement of Faxiu in Wang Shen's garden has several connotations. First, as a representative of the Buddhist faith, Faxiu functions in the painting as a warning to his co-guests, who are occupied with material concerns, that "even great achievements are empty against transcendental values".[300] At the same time, Faxiu himself was a learned and cultured person who freely mixed with men of letters. Also, while he condemns texts as surrogates for religion in his discourse records, he condemns a radical view of Chan without letters, and he declares that Buddhism does not shun the world: the world must not be shunned, but attachment to it. Faxiu thus perfectly embodies the "middle path", and his role in the painting could also be to indicate another way of approaching mundane pursuits: by being reserved and disciplined.

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[299] Gimello 1992.

[300] This concept, Gimello finds, is echoed in the simple and rustic poetry of the Northern Song (*pingtan* 平淡).

However, most intriguing is Faxiu's actual position in the painting: Faxiu is not placed among the scholars gathered in a central spot of the garden, yet he is not completely separated from them either. Gimello rightly observes that Zhao Mengfu's painting is a visual illustration of "how Buddhism takes its place in the public arena of civilized Chinese discourse": the painting places Chan in its Buddhist as well as Chinese contexts, a phenomenon we also find in the Chan establishment's textual productions in the Song dynasty.[301] According to Gimello, the space between Faxiu and the other scholars in the garden describes the ambivalence towards each other of both the monk and the scholars in the painting.

The space between Faxiu and the other scholars in the garden is arguably more than just pictorial space. However, I would argue that it describes not ambivalence, but the multitude of approaches that the monk and the literatus could each take toward the other. In fact, in this particular painting, Faxiu literally complements the other scholars: the illustration of his figure provides a balance to the overall pictorial design. This underscores the point that there is more than insecurity at play here, a point I explore below.

*Chan, literati life and commemoration texts*

In *Out of the Cloister: Literati Perspectives on Buddhism in Sung China, 960-1279*, Mark Halperin elaborates on how monks and literati viewed each other. His book is based on an extensive study of commemoration texts, texts that literati wrote to commemorate the construction of buildings on monastery sites. Often, these commemorations became inscriptions, but they were also collected in local gazetteers, regional literary anthologies and in the collected works of individuals.[302] In addition to prefaces for sūtras and inscriptions written on stūpas, commemoration texts are a way of studying, among other things, relationships between famous men and the clergy. Moreover, in contrast to the other two types of texts, commemoration texts do not conform to a formulaic type, and they are not necessarily written by men with strong affinities for Buddhism. These texts are primarily the result of the wishes of the

[301] Gimello finds that a Ming example of *Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden*, in which Faxiu is left out all together, does injustice to the importance of Buddhism in the Song.
[302] Commemoration texts have been around since the eighth century, but appear as a distinct literary genre since the eleventh century.

clergy to employ prominent men to save their work from oblivion, and of the desire of literati to remain known to posterity.[303]

Thus, Halperin writes, many Song authors use commemoration texts to critically discuss social ills. Often, such texts are terse accounts directed towards the Buddhist establishment itself. Most importantly, the writers criticize the establishment's wealth and its insufficient contribution to the nation due to tax exemptions. Also, the literati were upset because Buddhist practice "muddled what should have remained distinct and debased what was clear". Crucially, by Song times, the Buddhists ruled over funerary rituals, a practice that critical literati believed should have remained part of the classical Chinese tradition. A last group of disapproving writers did not object to Buddhism itself, but believed that the religion had declined, and that current practitioners were doing their faith an injustice by thinking and acting against its fundamentals.

Modern research uses such negative voices to describe the Song dynasty as a period in which the literati distanced themselves from Buddhism. This is then contrasted with the Tang dynasty, which is discussed as the religion's "Golden Age". Indeed, opinions in commemoration texts echo the work of officials such as Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072), who contended that Buddhism was a "disease that needs to be eliminated". Some Southern Song literati agreed with Ouyang. Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127-1206) provides a vivid illustration of how this is supposed to happen, using Ouyang's text:

> In seeking first to rein in people's hearts with ritual and propriety, one must be broad-minded and at ease, neither anxious nor angry, and, without ever troubling to use the slightest weapon, force Buddhist teachings to be always in flight, like howling fugitives. The text is like an upright lord, who with tasseled cap and dangling jade, and trailing belt and proper tablet, sits atop the temple dais and summons the riffraff below in the courtyard to count off their misdeeds. Even though there is no awesome force of crossed swords and glued tuning pegs, or impatient and strong cursing, the criminal faces still sweat and blush, being mortified without cease.[304]

However, Halperin shows that there were just as many positive views of the Buddhist faith and its establishment to complement the negative remarks. In the Northern Song, the Buddhist affinities of such renowned scholar-officials as Huang Tingjian and Su

[303] Many more commemoration texts survive in writer's collected works than in inscription collections, leading to the question of how many commemorations actually became inscriptions.
[304] Halperin 2006: 162.

Shi are well known. In fact, a commemoration text by Huang was critical of the Song government, rather than of the Buddhist establishment. Other scholar-officials, from the Northern and Southern Song, express in their commemoration texts admiration for concepts of magnanimity and charity promoted by the Buddhist clergy and their lay patrons. In fact, Ouyang Xiu himself can be said to show how Buddhism promotes a sense of modesty in a text in which he admires the deeds of the wealthy merchant Li Qianzhi. Li says that he feels secure in his work because he follows the Buddhist philosophy of parting with what he has. Ouyang, an opponent of Buddhism, here cannot deny that "the faith shaped this commoner's feelings".

Also, many writers find that Buddhist devotion does not only "nourish a sense of community, but reinforces family ties as well". They encourage families to donate to monasteries rather than invest in new residences for their descendants arguing that split families would lead to the splitting of wealth, while members of the same family donating to the same monastery would uphold the power of a clan.

Most importantly, Halperin writes how Buddhism was part of Song literati life, from birth to death. Literati would first come to know of Buddhism in the context of family life. They would be taken to temples as children to give offerings and participate in festivals. They would hear their mothers, sisters and wives chant sūtras, and as adults they would commission monks to tend burial grounds. Thus, many inscriptions are of a personal nature, describing family matters and personal affairs. Also, these texts do not talk of any "Confucian" or "Buddhist" causes: often literati in their Buddhist practices would simply follow family traditions without pausing to consider whether this was a "Buddhist" or "Confucian" ritual. In their political life, literati could often be connected to temples, too. For instance, during examinations which could be held in places distant from candidates' homes, aspiring scholar-officials would stay in monasteries. In later life, many exiled literati would also spend their days in temples. Su Shi's activities during such periods are well recorded. Once, the statesman Zhang Fangping 張方平 (1007-1091), friend of Su and colleague of Ouyang Xiu, paid Su 300,000 cash to print and distribute copies of the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*.[305] Again, Su Shi's collected works record the many inscriptions he wrote, in office and in exile, on portraits of Buddhist monks. Of historical, religious and art-historical value, these inscriptions show that the statesman did not just consider the

[305] Halperin 2006: 178.

works of fellow officials and literati such as Li Gonglin and Cui Bo, discussed earlier, but that he felt an attachment for images by unknown artists, too.

Halperin argues that Song writers' negative comments on Buddhism should not be read in isolation. Rather, such derogatory comments, often written for monasteries themselves, indicate that Buddhism and Buddhists temples assume a new complexity in the Song. The Buddhist establishment as well as the literati each reach out to include the other in their respective worlds. Buddhists allow access to scholar-officials who, by seeking to make themselves known through commemorations, recognize the establishment in terms that are, in fact, stronger than before.

Regarding the curious question of how Buddhists could accept derogatory commemoration texts, Halperin makes several suggestions. First, he writes, many monks could not read, and would simply not have been able to interpret the texts. The monks that could read the texts could hardly request revisions as monasteries relied on official beneficence. Second, criticisms would have little practical consequences. Most of the time they were not directed towards particular abbots or temples, but covered general issues. Finally, the physical existence of the text was more important than its actual content, an important point to which I will return below.

Literati dealings with the clergy describe literati as much as they describe Buddhism, the Buddhist establishment or, for that matter, abbots. Just as literati are a heterogeneous category that conducts different kinds of relationships with the clergy, Buddhist temples and its monks and abbots cannot be defined in a single sentence. The Chan establishment consisted of large, public temples near the Song capitals as well as small monasteries in remote areas. These larger and smaller centers were headed by well-known, influential abbots who moved in higher circles of society, as well as withdrawn recluses, just as there were monks who could read and those who could not. Further, within each monastery it would have been impossible to distinguish between such issues as private and public space. Monasteries were home to the clergy and even to members of the laity, who could live in temples for many years. Some monasteries were home to Confucian shrines or looked after deceased persons until their time of interment. Many hosted festivals, markets and gatherings of religious and secular natures.

Just as there is no single definition or clear distinction for each of these groups, there is no single explanation for how each understood the beliefs and the art of the other.

*The clergy, literati and the calligraphy of Zhang Jizhi 張即之(1186-1266)*

Amy McNair's work on the reception history of the calligraphy of Zhang Jizhi is a case study that illustrates that single definitions for the clergy, literati and their views of each other are futile.[306] Zhang was a scholar-official and a calligrapher, as well as a devout Buddhist, and he was on close terms with many disciples of Wuzhun Shifan at Tiantong monastery. Zhang developed three new types of calligraphy, and his artistic innovations have long been appreciated in traditional scholarship in Japan, and in modern scholarship, too. Traditional Chinese appreciations of his work are not uniform and describe different, as well as changing values. To monks of the late Song and early Yuan dynasties, Zhang's calligraphy was primarily of religious value. Also, his talent and skill are judged to be of religious origin, rather than connected to an aesthetic tradition. In contrast, two Yuan dynasty officials find it impossible to place Zhang within a classical tradition of calligraphy, and judge him harshly. However, in the Ming dynasty, Zhang is admired by several literati and connoisseurs. These include not only well-known Buddhist laymen such as Bi Xizhi 畢熙志 (act. c. 1620) and Dong Qichang, but lesser-known figures such as An Shifeng 安世鳳 and Xie Ju 謝矩.

McNair argues that the writings of each of these critics reveal their attitudes towards Buddhism and art. The monks were occupied with "a religious justification for the place of a work of art in their faith", while the Yuan critics may have intended to "tie Zhang Jizhi to marginalized Buddhist styles in painting and calligraphy". While Bi Xizhi and Dong Qichang were appreciative of Zhang, she writes, neither attempted to locate Zhang within the calligraphic tradition of his time: Bi connected him to the "founder" of calligraphy, Wang Xizhi, while Dong believed that Zhang's inspiration reflected the Chan concept of the original genius. McNair is keen to show differences between "Buddhist" purposes for art and "Confucian" purposes for art and "Buddhist" and "Confucian" interpretations of Zhang's work. I would also emphasize the differences *within* the groups of Buddhist and Confucian critics. The Ming connoisseur An Shifeng writes

[306] McNair 2001.

> Men in the past reviled Zhang Jizhi's calligraphy. But when I examine the expressions of his brush, I sense he did not intend to be unorthodox, but only to make an image of his feelings.[307]

Similarly, Xie Ju says

> I sigh that this sūtra the Buddhists treasure is also treasured by Confucianists as calligraphy by a sage worthy. Certainly it should be treasured. Jizhi was famous in the Song dynasty for his calligraphy, and we Confucianists treasure his ink traces. Thus a thing that is Buddhist yet admired by we Confucianists may be revered indeed![308]

These remarks are very different from those by Bi Xizhi and Dong Qichang, who, according to McNair, search for the roots of Zhang's talent. An and Xie are simply full of praise for his work, and according to Xie, Zhang's work was praised before in similar terms, too.

## 5. WORD AND IMAGE IN ENCOMIA ON ECCENTRICS

In the above discussion, it has become clear that there is no single type of painter or artistic style for paintings of Chan eccentrics. Also, while the inscribers of these paintings are all called "Chan abbots", they similarly come from a heterogeneous group which upheld different kinds of relationships with other groups in Song and Yuan society, as can be understood from literati texts. Based on these points, encomia on portraits of Chan eccentrics and those collected in the Chan canon assume a new complexity. The Chan eccentric portrait acquires multiple materialities: its significance and the process through which this is conferred to it or inferred from it changes from context to context, depending on the subjects involved.

With regard to painted portraits, it is rewarding to reconsider the significance of the encomia on the paintings and in Chan texts in this context. Introduced in Chapter Two, as well as earlier in this chapter, encomia on portraits of Chan eccentrics play with issues of interpretation of the visual sign. Inscribed on painted portraits, their nature is very similar to the inscriptions on portraits of historical abbots: they describe the person or persons illustrated and often begin or end with a question. For instance, on a painting of Budai by Hu Zhifu, Yanqi Guangwen writes

[307] McNair 2001: 74.
[308] McNair 2001: 84.

In a bustling market, why not cut loose?
Mustn't tell dreams in front of a madman
He shakes his brain and turns his head, no one knows why
The pole on his shoulder is as heavy as a mountain[309]

On the painted surface, read and viewed in combination with the image, such texts are subject to different interpretations. They could be indicative of a dialogue between the calligrapher and the painter who question each other, and the viewer, using word and image. The calligrapher's question is usually enclosed in the inscription. The painter arguably does not answer this question. Instead, using such characteristics of visual representation as movement, space and vitality, discussed in Chapter Two, he asks questions of his own. In this particular example, Hu Zhifu's Budai is moving, and all that Yanqi Guangwen does is describe that movement, without even hinting at possible reasons for it. Again, a portrait of Budai inscribed by Xiyan Liaohui reads:

Half the cloth sack is missing
His black cane pole is short a length
His finger pointing in the air;
If it is not the Buddha, what is it? tsk,tsk,tsk! [310]

Budai is pointing at a small image of the Buddha, but Xiyan's question serves only to doubt the value of that likeness, not to confirm it. In other paintings of this type, Budai may be pointing into emptiness, thus leaving questions similar to Xiyan's question here unanswered. Thus, as noted earlier, the interpretation of the paintings is left to "unlimited semiosis": calligraphers and painters overrule the possibility of a single, unique and dominant explanation of the image by holding on to the tension of the question itself. This pattern repeats itself endlessly. For a portrait of an eccentric reading a sūtra by moonlight, Yuxi Simin 玉溪思(d. 1337) writes

Just this one fascicle of sūtra
The words are difficult to make out
When the sun comes up, the moon also sets
When will I finish reading it? [311]

[309] Levine and Lippit 2007: 94.
[310] Levine and Lippit 2007: 100.
[311] Levine and Lippit 2007: 124. "Reading sūtra's by moonlight" was a popular pictorial subject for the Chan establishment, almost always paired with "mending clothes in the sun"---see the next inscription. The themes were probably first combined in a poem by the Song poet Wang Fengchen 王逢辰 and painted in ink in the Song and Yuan dynasties, and in Japan.

For a painting of an eccentric mending clothes in the sun, Dongsou Yuankai 東叟元愷(act. 1314-1340) writes

> One thread passes through the eye of a needle,
> Patches the holes in a tattered garment
> Biting down firmly with one's jaws
> Immediately it is broken[312]

Both abbots describe and question the image rather than explaining or interpreting it, or even appreciating its value.

As Allee shows, the specialized vocabulary of some calligraphic inscriptions could point towards the intellectual nature of some encomia.[313] However, this does not change the problem of the interpretation of the image, a problem that is raised in every inscribed painting. It only points to one of the many types of viewers that these images could have had.

Another, less studied type of viewer emerges when we consider the encomia collected in the Chan texts, without the paintings. Here, there are interesting differences between appreciations of this type of art and portraits of historical abbots and other Chan personalities, which also reflect back on to the inscribed portraits, and even the portraits without any inscriptions. Most importantly, it seems, the writers of the encomia on portraits of eccentrics in the Chan canon do not prioritize viewing the paintings.

First, the encomia on portraits of eccentrics collected in Chan discourse records do not mention names of artists, let alone appreciate them. It is not very common to mention artists in Chan encomia---the painters of portraits of historical abbots are unknown. Still, some types of encomia do note particular artists' talents: as has been discussed earlier, Xisou Shaotan praises Hu Zhifu in an inscription for a painting of an Arhat. Again, artists who were also Chan disciples are praised in farewell poems. In contrast, eulogies for portraits of eccentrics do not mention them at all.

Second, while portraits of eccentrics are found in discourse records under the heading "eulogies for portraits of the Buddha and the patriarchs", or under

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312 Levine and Lippit 2007: 126.
313 See the discussion under section one above.

"appreciations of portraits", they are never found under another important section "requests for appreciations" *qingzan*. This section generally appears at the end of the list of appreciations for images of the Buddha, the eccentrics, the patriarchs and the abbots, and it contains titles and names of persons who requested a portrait with an inscription. Under every person it records the inscription he or she received. This list consists of members of the clergy as well as the laity and it even mentions traveling monks who might have taken portraits with them to other monasteries, or for proselytizing purposes. The inscriptions under this section are always for portraits of the abbot in whose discourse record they are collected.

This raises questions as to whether the clergy or the laity would request inscriptions for portraits other than those of the abbot whose discourse record was being compiled. It is quite possible that because discourse records focus on the sayings and writings of particular abbots, they would only record requests for appreciations of portraits of that abbot---this would perfectly enhance the importance of that abbot in words as well as images. At the same time it is interesting that the discourse records provide us with no information on a possible "small coterie" of admirers of eccentric painting, either. Rather, the inscriptions on portraits of eccentrics collected in Chan texts seem to stand perfectly as texts alone, without the painted image. For instance, three inscriptions on a painting of the four sleepers Hanshan, Shide, Fenggan, and the tiger in a landscape, presently in the Tokyo National Museum (Fig.3), read:

> Among the different species, their behaviour renounces love and anger
> The flowers and trees of the wintry cliff anticipate spring
> Huddled together in one  lump, each one dreams his own dreams
> Tiger's self is tiger; ah, the human's self is human
> Inscribed by Mount taibai's old monk Ruzhi[314]
>
> Leaving behind Mount Emei and mount Wutai
> They quickly submit to the master, who comes from the land of happiness
> When dreaming, they together expound the way of wakefulness
> Profound ones among living beings, their eyes are not open
> Eulogized by monk Wumeng Tan' e [315]

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[314] Pingshi Ruzhi 平砥石如(1268-1350) in Levine and Lippit 2007: 104.
[315] Mengtang Tan'e 夢堂曇噩(1285-1373) in Levine and Lippit 2007: 104.

The weary one doesn't hold on to his broom, and the idle one doesn't versify
They use each other as pillows, asleep in the shade of pine trees
Old Fenggan is not in their midst
Among the parasitic weeds, who recognizes the mind of the non-beast
Inscribed by Huaguo Ziwen, dweller on Mount Xuedou [316]

These inscriptions can perfectly be read independent of the painting. As such, they compare well to the following two inscriptions on paintings of the same theme that are now lost:

Shide, Hanshan, the old tiger and Fenggan
Are asleep and have arrived at the year of the donkey.
The beginning of absolute nothingness, yeh!
Suddenly the earth rises and the future opens vivid eyes
For a lot of apparitions and self-delusions[317]

Man and tiger form a unity.
Why are they such fervent companions
When their heart and face are not the same?
The dream-thought mutates the confusion.
Wind rattles at the pine gate,
And the colours of spring are late.[318]

These inscriptions, which are appreciations of Hanshan, Shide, Fenggan and the tiger, rather than of a particular painter or style of painting, have as much value in their function of texts as when they appear next to images. As such, they differ strikingly from inscriptions on portraits of historical abbots that often refer to the painted image, and even the painter or the person requesting the painting. This difference becomes clear if we recall Yangqi Fanghui's inscription on his own portrait mentioned at the beginning of section one and compare it to an inscription of a certain Shaomi of Xiangfu Temple on a painting of the four sleepers by Moku'an Rei'en. Yangqi's inscription, cited earlier, reads:

A mouth like a beggar's open sack;
A nose like a shit ladle in the garden!
This gentleman troubled himself,
applying his talented brush to the completion of this portrait
I entrust it to the world's judgement.

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[316] Huaguo Ziwen 華国子文(1269-1353) in Levine and Lippit 2007: 104.
[317] From the discourse records of Changweng Rujing (1163-1228) in Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 144.
[318] Qiaoyin Wuyi 樵隱悟逸 (d. 1334) in Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 144.

In contrast, Shaomi's text reads:

> Old Fenggan embraces his tiger and sleeps
> All huddled together with Shide and Hanshan
> They dream their big dream, which lingers on
> While a frail old tree clings to the bottom of the old precipice
> Shaomi of the Xiangfu temple salutes with folded hands[319]

The first text clearly complements a painting; the eulogy for the four Chan eccentrics does not.

Also, encomia for Chan eccentrics collected in Chan texts differ from encomia written for the same theme by laymen. Not many paintings of eccentrics inscribed by lay persons survive. In fact, the following example may well be the only one. Still, the character of the inscription suffices to expose an unmistakable dissimilarity

> Chan believers say the origin of all things is emptiness
> An enlightened one like you, is there another?
> Cold or hot, just one plain robe is enough
> Every day carrying nets you accompany fishermen [320]

This inscription was written on a portrait of Xianzi by the Japanese painter Yōgetsu 揚月 (act. late fifteenth century) (Fig. 23). Its author is a certain Yu Chengxian 宇成憲, who was most probably a member of a diplomatic mission to Japan. The fact that Yu does not mention a monastic affiliation in his signature leads many authors to believe that he was a layman. The way he uses language in this eulogy is different from abbots' encomia for this type of painting, too. He talks about "Chan believers", and, most importantly, addresses the painted figure in ways that would require a viewer to see the actual painting.

From the above it is clear that the value of encomia for portraits of Chan eccentrics extends beyond their function as accompaniments to the paintings. In fact, they are texts that can be read on a par with the stories of the eccentrics mentioned throughout the discourse records of many abbots, in their lectures and private interviews. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that these texts are part of Chan religion as much as they are complements to paintings.

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[319] Levine and Lippit 2007: 106.
[320] Levine and Lippit 2007: 120.

In a chapter on the role of images in occult Buddhism in China, Gimello discusses Chinese Buddhists' uses of texts and images in rituals.[321] He criticizes attitudes towards Buddhism among modern Buddhologists as well as art historians that reveal an obsessive preference for either texts or images. Historians of Buddhism saw themselves more as historians than Buddhist scholars; art historians were previously concerned with issues of style and formal properties, and are now, in the light of the importance of material culture, focused on problems such as patterns of patronage. Gimello finds the rise of material culture studies a salutary development, but cautions against turning away from the study of texts, and especially the materiality of texts.

Texts were, and are, objects of veneration. Gimello discusses the example of the veneration of Zhunti 准提, a goddess of esoteric Buddhism introduced to China in the eighth century. Images of this goddess were, similar to images of other gods and goddesses of the esoteric cult, hardly shown to the public. Instead, devotees would be encouraged to practice incantation, and recite texts accompanied by hand-gestures in their worship.[322] Therefore, Gimello argues, in studies of Buddhist art we need to marry texts to images and study them for their intrinsic value.

Whether the texts of eulogies for portraits of Chan eccentrics were ever pronounced in recitation remains unclear. The fact is that they were part of a collection that included texts that were pronounced, often in public, and that were listened to, and that those texts included the names of the same figures that were appreciated in paintings---the eccentrics.

In this context it is interesting to compare the colophons, signatures and seals of abbots on paintings of eccentrics to inscriptions and names of donors of steles, a popular form of religious art in China.[323] Abbots' inscriptions are in fact donor inscriptions that focus on the figure illustrated with the utmost respect. Shaomi's inscription in which he signs "saluting with folded hands", discussed above, is representative of many such signatures by abbots who refer to themselves in modest and humble ways. Thus, their names on eccentric paintings are not unlike the names of donors on steles. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that the religious value of the eulogies, that would have been published at the same time that most of the paintings

[321] Gimello 2004.
[322] Sometimes a mirror imprinted with the deity's form and incantation would be used as an altar, thus allowing the practitioner to fuse with the deity through reflection.
[323] Chinese steles, including steles of eccentrics, are discussed in Chapter Four.

were made, would extend to the inscribed paintings, and to the paintings without inscriptions, too.

In modern scholarship, the encomia are characterized as “typically Chan”. Helmut Brinker says of the eulogies for paintings of the four sleepers that

> Statements of this kind make it clear that the theme of the ‘four sleepers’ is meant to demonstrate the insight into one’s own Self leading to the realization of the Buddha Nature. They symbolize the absence of opposite minds cleansed by Zen practice and freed from the constraint of secular notions.[324]

This is a pattern, scholarship finds, that repeats itself in “Chan painting” in monochrome ink. According to Wen Fong

> The transparent technique seems to almost express the perception espoused by Chan Buddhism of existence as emptiness.[325]

It should be obvious by now that there is no unified style of “Chan painting and calligraphy”, there are no general formal guidelines, and there is no established canon for artists.[326] In fact, in *Aesthetics of Zen Buddhist Painting and Calligraphy*, Brinker admits that “Chan art” is not a separate genre in art, and it is not easy to isolate Chan features in works of art. To term spontaneity in painting and writing as “Chan art” is too simple and one-sided; Brinker believes that “Chan art” must be seen in the setting of China, Japan, and Buddhist art. Still, the second half of Brinker’s study is an attempt to show how certain artists “translate traditional, formal principles and select new modes of utterance under the concepts of freedom and multilateral receptivity advocated by Zen” Thus, Brinker’s argument does not fundamentally alter modern scholarship’s long-held, yet vague sense of what “Chan art” should mean. The conflict that his research illustrates is typical of modern discourse’s struggle to define “Chan art”, and Brinker’s attempt to describe a Chan influence in art leaves readers with the same problem: how exactly does Chan work in art?

The above discussion of encomia, abbots and artists shows that it may be more rewarding to ask not what “Chan art” is, but how Chan understands art. The encomia collected in discourse records and on paintings of eccentrics are examples of ways in

[324] Brinker and Kanazawa 1996: 144.
[325] Fong 1992: 355. This kind of understanding of Chan and art is reiterated in other, contemporary research. See for instance Uta Lauer’s definition of “Chan calligraphy” in Lauer 2002.
[326] Brinker 1992.

which Chan relates to art. Read in combination with portraits of eccentrics on the paintings and in the Chan canon, the inscribed texts question interpretation of the art object as visual sign. In Chapter Two and in the section above, the encomia have been shown to prevent blocking chains of signification that would result in a single, dominant understanding of the portrait image. Instead, abbots repeatedly question the very existence and nature of the painted image. Here, the tension of the question rather than the necessity of an answer seems more important, as paintings become objects of contemplation.

Moreover, it appears that the encomia can just as easily be read independent of the art that they supposedly complement. Appreciations of the eccentrics perfectly stand alone as texts, on paintings as well as in the canon, where they are placed between other words written and spoken by Chan abbots, and venerated as part of Chan religion by the general public. On paintings, they are comparable to dedications such as those found on other forms of religious art, as their writers assume the humble role of devotees. Due to the use of particular language, some encomia suggest an intellectual readership. To monks and laity, they would first and foremost be objects of veneration. Thus, the encomia themselves become objects of contemplation, too. They activate new chains of signification, and not just on the paintings they complement. An awareness of the existence of these inscribed appreciations arguably extends to the many uninscribed paintings by unknown artists, which would then be part of Chan religion, too.

# Chapter Four
# The Eccentrics in Visual and Textual Traditions

This chapter argues for the multiple identities of Chan eccentric monks. In addition to Chan personalities, the wandering saints could be Bodhisattvas, poets, Daoist immortals and alchemists. This becomes clear only when we examine their painted representations in conjunction with images of the monks in stone, and references to them in Song and Yuan literature.

From the Song dynasty onwards, the Chan eccentrics were depicted in a variety of artistic formats and materials, besides painting on silk and paper. In the Song and Yuan they feature most prominently in stonework: carved into sculptures and engraved onto steles. The carvings of eccentrics in stone have hardly been studied in conjunction with their illustrations in painting. Yet, the first section of this chapter shows that this new type of material evidence points to new interpretations of the same artistic theme, with religious, artistic and sociological effects.

In section two, I compare a broad textual engagement with the eccentrics to a particular Daoist claim on the monks. It will become clear that in the Song and Yuan, the eccentrics were part of private, rather than public discourse. While society recognized Hanshan as a poet, and scholar-officials mentioned him in their work, he does not prominently feature in belles lettres of the time. Instead, Hanshan and Budai seem to be emblems of an active religion across official traditions focused on otherworldly beings. In art, this religion became manifest in images of eccentrics and spirits in all kinds of media that reflect moods of strangeness and restlessness. Contemporaneous literature on painting complements this, through a focus on painters of spirits and elaborate discussions of paintings of the theme.

## 1. SCULPTURES AND RUBBINGS: THE ECCENTRICS IN STONE

As a medium, stone challenges artists in ways that are different from paper and silk. In the form of large round sculptures in cave temples, stone benefits from a different sense of scale. Also, immovable sculptures require a different process of viewing.

Stone steles are the basis for rubbings, and therefore theoretically inexhaustible generators of images and texts.

This section considers examples of depictions of the eccentrics in sculptures and rubbings. On the one hand, it discusses contrasts between the two formats. Large images at the famous cave site of Feilaifeng in Hangzhou that are part of a sculptural program sponsored by imperial patrons are set against rubbings of smaller steles from sites further away from the routes of classical and modern tourism, funded by laymen and -women of temple associations. The discussion also pays attention to similarities. The aesthetics of the sculptures and the rubbings are evidence of artistic crossovers between the two media, and of their connection with painting. Thus, the sculptures and rubbings underscore the existence of an artistic theme of the Chan eccentric, while at the same time describing new ways of understanding the wandering saints. For Song society, both formats were part of a long tradition of stonework in China, so it will be as well to embed each format in its own history.

### IMPERIALLY SPONSORED CAVE SITES AND THE CAVE TEMPLES OF FEILAIFENG

Situated on the northwestern outskirts of Hangzhou, the cave temples of Feilaifeng are the largest concentration of grottoes in the coastal area of southeast China. The site, which was partly constructed by Yuan dynasty rulers, is home to more than 300 images from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries. Today, its best-known image is a Southern Song sculpture of the voluminous, grinning eccentric monk Budai (Fig. 24).

Intriguingly, within a period of approximately one hundred years, Feilaifeng saw the creation of a second image of this Chan eccentric (Fig. 25). In earlier scholarship, this later image is often contrasted with its Southern Song predecessor. Stylistically, the two sculptures are held to be each other’s opposites, and the Yuan image is regarded as the inferior of the two. I believe that in spite of a difference in artistic approach, both sculptures share the basic characteristics of the artistic theme of the Chan eccentric. Further, I argue that beyond aesthetics, exploring the concept of two images of Budai at Feilaifeng through issues of donors and viewers of the site, offers new ways of understanding Song and Yuan belief in this eccentric monk. This art shows that Budai performs different roles in response to the different purposes and motivations of the sponsors of his images.

It is not clear who funded the Southern Song Budai. The Yuan sculpture is credited to the Yuan dynasty rulers. By funding the Feilaifeng site, Yuan rulers adhered to a tradition of imperial patronage of Buddhist art at many sites dating back to the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Therefore, I will first compare issues of purpose and motivation for Feilaifeng with similar issues for Longmen, a well-known early site.

A large number of studies is devoted to aesthetic and stylistic analyses of the images of Longmen, near Luoyang, in modern Chinese, Japanese and Western scholarship. However, Amy McNair's *Donors of Longmen* may be the first book devoted entirely to the story of the sponsors of a cave site.[327] McNair attempts to "reconstruct a history of Longmen based on the people who paid for its production". She describes a broad range of donors: not just the imperial families of the Northern Wei and Tang dynasties, but also male and female palace officials, eunuchs, monks, nuns and members of guilds and lay societies. Many of these donors left elaborate dedicatory inscriptions which illustrate religious and sociological concerns that stand out at the site. The texts describe the extent of donors' expenses. McNair writes that

> A prince demonstrated his filial piety to all when he claimed he 'opened his treasury and was liberal with the tortoise shells and cowries' for his late mother, while two laymen recognized by the state for loyalty stated they had 'exhausted our families' wealth on behalf of the imperial house', and an aristocratic young woman said she had 'parted with half my hairpins and girdles' for her late father, recently executed for plotting against the prince-regent.[328]

According to McNair, the rhetoric of expenditure in these inscriptions is not hyperbole: donors often indeed spent all they had. They believed in the merit that the construction of images would generate, as well as in social goals, which could include, for instance proclaiming a devotion for the imperial family.

In combination with historical records, such as dynastic histories, and contemporaneous literature, such as poems that describe Longmen, the dedicatory inscriptions also testify to the public nature of Longmen. Royal parties visited regularly, as did government officials, and during festivals young people went to the site for picnics. At the same time, the records are evidence for things that did *not* happen at Longmen. For instance, McNair concludes that, apart from the imperial

[327] McNair 2007.
[328] McNair 2007: 6.

cave temples, the shrines at Longmen did not remain within a particular family or clan and were not necessarily revisited by late generations.[329] This is important for Longmen's art, because it shows that the donors believed the images to operate primarily in a spiritual realm where they could endlessly generate merit without the intercession of living descendants: there are no spaces in Longmen for extra ritual activities.

The deities depicted at Longmen and their position within the caves reflect donors' intentions. Writing on the first imperially sponsored cave shrine of Longmen, the Binyang Central grotto, McNair elaborates on these characteristics. The Binyang Central Grotto was made by the Northern Wei emperor Xuanwu for his parents, emperor Xiaowen and empress Wenzhao. The grotto is of a complex iconographic program that can be divided into three stages: the entryway, the interior and the east wall. The persons and themes illustrated in each of these three stages lead the visitor inward towards the main icons and then transfer the merit gained through the worship of these icons to the beneficiaries depicted on the east wall, or the exit. The main icons are colossal images of the Buddhas of the past, present and future. In contrast, the images of Xiaowen and Wenzhao are lifesize.[330] On the east wall, they are depicted above sculptures of the so-called "spirit kings", and below illustrations of stories from the Buddha's past lives and the historical Buddha's life, and a scene showing the famous discussion between the wise layman Vimalakīrti and the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

McNair contends that Binyang reveals "different avenues of merit generation". It is a gift of the emperor Xuanwu to his parents, but it is also a method of self-representation and self-reward. In the *History of the Northern Wei*, the grotto is described as built according to the standards of Yungang, a reference to the work and power of the emperor Xuanwu's great-grandfather who was responsible for that site. Again, the three colossal Buddhas of Binyang may also symbolically represent the past, present and future of the emperor Xuanwu's own dynasty. On the east wall, the emperor's parents are placed among stories that portray ultimate acts of charity and wisdom that reflect back to describe their characters, and the character of Xuanwu himself. Finally, the "spirit kings", that in sixth-century Chinese art often

[329] In contrast, this is often the case at the cave temples of Dunhuang.
[330] The images of Xiaowen and Wenzhao were first identified by Alexander Soper as images of the donor of Binyang, the emperor Xuanwu, and his empress. Amy Mcnair's suggestion that they are the beneficiaries rather than the donors of Binyang seems more appropriate.

symbolically represent the submission of other faiths to Buddhism, may in this context represent the submission of other states to the Northern Wei.[331] McNair's detailed description of the Binyang grotto shows how a particular type of patron, the royal family, made use of space, theme and style to show their purposes and motivations at Longmen.

In the light of a long tradition of imperially sponsored images and texts in cave temples, the Yuan shrines at Feilaifeng may at first not appear to be remarkable. Indeed, modern Chinese, Japanese and Western scholarship still predominantly focuses on early cave shrines created between the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Tang. Often, modern scholarship also focuses on Ming and Qing developments at these early sites. The Yuan dynasty and Feilaifeng are never part of these considerations. There are only two substantial Chinese studies of Feilaifeng, and only one Western article devoted entirely to the site. However, as a Yuan project that includes sculptures from much earlier periods, Feilaifeng and its images of Budai are interesting for at least two reasons. First, the Song and Yuan dynasties mark the beginning of a period in which the building of cave temples diminished. Instead, there is a rise of opulently decorated temples. In *Chinese Sculpture*, Angela Howard describes this transition, and notes that the large cave shrines of this period are found mainly in the outer regions of the Song empire, such as in the present day provinces of Sichuan and Shaanxi.[332] In this context, the Feilaifeng caves and their situation near the Southern Song capital are significant. Second, with regard to the images of Budai in particular, it is fascinating that Feilaifeng is famous as a storehouse for the most important sculptural works of Tibetan Buddhism in the interior of China, while Tibetan Buddhism hardly deals with  personalities such as Budai. Furthermore, the Bodhisattva Maitreya, whose incarnation Budai is often held to be, is perhaps one of the least popular Bodhisattvas in the Tibetan pantheon. Maitreya's influence in Tibetan Buddhism cannot measure up to that of Guanyin or Mañjuśrī. Thus, to find at least two images of the deity at this site, of which one can definitely be dated to the Yuan dynasty, is remarkable. Below, I will consider both these issues in order to understand the significance of the Budai images at Feilaifeng for Song and Yuan art, and for Chan.

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[331] For a study of the "spirit kings" in the art of sixth-century China, see Bunker 1964.
[332] Howard 2006.

In research on Song and Yuan cave shrines, Feilaifeng is overshadowed by another popular site of that period, the cave temples of Dazu in Sichuan province. In *Summit of Treasures*, Angela Howard analyzes the religion and art of Dazu.[333] Her analysis offers ways to understand Feilaifeng and its images of Budai, too. The sculptural program at Dazu reveals an understanding of Buddhism in Song China as an inclusive faith, in which major denominations such as Huayan and Chan coexist with vibrant local traditions.

Howard describes the cave temples of Dazu as a collection of reliefs across the sites of Large Baodingshan and Small Baodingshan, and a surrounding area of outcrops. The layman Zhao Zifeng 趙智風 (b. 1159) is usually credited as the founder of both the Large and the Small Baodingshan. While working at Baodingshan, he extended his patronage to the neighbouring county of Anyue, where he artistically developed already existing grottoes and sites, which now form the outcrop. The general public today tends to focus on the Large Baodingshan only. However, Howard believes that the entire complex should be seen as tightly interrelated: the Large Baodingshan functioned as a teaching ground that would introduce the spiritually aware to the inner enclave, the Small Baodingshan. The outerfield reliefs, then, should be seen as stations on a pilgrim circuit, and the deities depicted there as defenders of the inner sacred grounds.

Zhao Zifeng considered himself the heir of Liu Benzun 柳本尊 (d. 907), a Tang dynasty layman and founder of an esoteric type of Buddhism. Zhao used the Dazu temples to successfully shape a new religion with a cultic focus on Liu Benzun. The Tang layman is shown on a great number of reliefs, singly or as part of the crown of the Vairocana Buddha, the central Buddha of esoteric Buddhism. Most prominent are the colossal images of Liu Benzun's "ten austerities", that show a crucial period in Liu's life when he underwent hardship as part of his religious practice. Howard reveals how Zhao Zifeng's design of Liu Benzun's "ten austerities" sets Liu's practice on a par with the established doctrines of Chan and Huayan, also depicted at the site. Due to Zhao's inventiveness and local artists' creativity, the Dazu cave temples can be regarded as a true amalgamation of local and orthodox Buddhist traditions.

[333] Howard 2001.

Particularly pertinent to this discussion are Howard's descriptions of Chan elements at Dazu. She believes that aspects of Chan doctrine may be found in the concept behind the frequently combined depictions of Zhao and Liu: this iconography emphasizes the teacher-student relationship essential to Chan. Also, she contends that the motif of the circle, which is repeatedly found behind images of deities at Dazu, derives from Chan. She even believes that a "Chan doctrine of Subjective Idealism" dominates some of the inscriptions at Dazu.[334] The extent of "Chan" in these particular elements can be ambiguous, but at least three sculptural projects at the Large Baodingshan and in Anyue refer to Chan directly. At Baodingshan, Zhao depicted the *Ox-Herding Parable*, a popular parable in Song Chan that describes a herdsman who tries to bring his ox into submission.[335]At the cliff site of Zizhong, and in the grotto of Yuanjuedong in Anyue, there are two sculptures of the Buddha smiling down at Mahākāśyapa, the scene of the first transmission of the flame in Chan, and the calligraphy for the inscription for one of these sculptures is by a Chan abbot.

How are these various Chan elements integrated into the larger program of Dazu? Notably, the images at Dazu, including the Chan images, are not separated from other images by niches. Instead they belong to what Howard calls "the monumental style":

> Sculpture in the round that displays radically simplified forms enhanced by sparse details, half-bust images, and images in low relief enclosed in roundels; special arrangement of the images in enormous niches; and the magisterial and unobtrusive blending of realistic and idealized images within the same composition to refer to the secular and the divine, respectively. This last includes incorporation of the original natural surroundings within the supernatural world.[336]

The previous section noted that in Longmen too there is a mixture of realistic and idealistic images. However, breaking down the demarcations between them, and between different Buddhist doctrines, is perhaps a Song innovation that can be found in Dazu, and in Feilaifeng, too.

The shrines of Feilaifeng are situated on hills opposite the famous Lingyin temple, one of the most important Chan temples in the Song and Yuan dynasties. In a

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[334] Howard does not explain the "Doctrine of Subjective Idealism", but she may refer to Chan theories on reincarnation---see Howard 2001: 43.
[335] For more on this parable and its illustrations in the Song, see Jang 1992 and Chapter Five of this thesis.
[336] Howard 2001: 154.

substantial article on the site, Richard Edwards leads the reader along Feilaifeng's main caves, Qingling, Yuru and Longhong.[337] These are deep grottoes, that, by Song times, were already embellished with images and inscriptions. Many of these early sculptures are damaged, and Edwards feels it is "impossible to evaluate their nature or understand their individual styles". Of course, this also follows from the fact that the early images, too, were produced during different eras. What is important is that surviving examples show varied degrees of artistic achievement as well as different themes and styles, indicating a range of donors with varied interests. For instance, the Qingling cave holds one of the most beautiful examples of early sculpture at Feilaifeng, in the form of a tableau of sixteen figures surrounding an image of the Buddha Vairocana. This tableau is in fact a low-relief plaque, executed in a fine linear style that reminds the viewer of painting and woodblock prints. The image's donor was a certain Hu Chengde, whose dedicatory inscription is dated 1022. Later viewers added to Hu's inscription, with texts dated 1071, 1072, 1079 and 1222.

Near the Vairocana plaque is a series of eighteen Arhats. There are many images of Arhats at Feilaifeng, from a very early period. Three more sets of eighteen Arhats can be seen along the exit of Qingling, with dedications from the Xianping era (998-1003). Moreover, Qingling's neighbouring cave, Yuru, is, in fact, known as the "Arhat cave". Here, the Arhats are arranged along the entrance to the cave in groups of two and three, and fifteen Arhats are situated opposite each other near the exit. Both the Qingling and Yuru caves have donor inscriptions for their Arhat images. From these inscriptions, it emerges that the sculptures were individual donations: the inscriptions mention the donor and the particular Arhat that they sponsored, indicated by number. Such texts connect donor and image in concrete terms, and merit is directed to an individual as the result of the creation of a designated image.[338]

The Yuru images are of a slightly later date than the Qingling Arhats. Inscriptions for two Yuru Arhats date them to 1026, and Edwards believes that this date can hold for all the Arhat sculptures in that cave. He describes the Yuru Arhats as comparatively less detailed: the images are placed on simple bases and consist of vertical blocks. Beyond the question of levels of finesse, the popularity of the Arhat image at Yuru, Qingling and, for that matter Feilaifeng is significant. I will return to this point below.

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[337] Edwards 1984.
[338] Edwards 1984: 7.

In contrast to earlier sculptures at Feilaifeng, Edwards contends, Yuan dynasty images at the site indicate a sculptural program created with specific intentions. The earliest Yuan images are found above the entrance of the Qingling cave, in the form of a trinity of the Buddha Vairocana accompanied by the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, dated by an inscription to 1282. Another trinity, with the Buddha Amitābha as the main deity and datable between 1283-1292, is found in Feilaifeng's third main cave, Longhong. The Longhong cave is filled with Yuan images of Bodhisattvas such as Guanyin, and Yuan dedications. While deities such as Amitābha and Guanyin were not new to Chinese Buddhism, Edwards rightly notes that the Yuan focus on these particular deities may have been encouraged by a need to meet Tibetan rather than Chinese Buddhist ideals.

The most important Yuan images were carved under the supervision of Yanglian Zhenjia, who held the title of "Supervisor of Buddhist Teaching South of the Yangzi River". Originally Tibetan or Tangut, Yanglian practiced a Tibetan style of Buddhism which was also the main doctrine of the Mongol rulers of the Yuan court. The Mongols shared Buddhism with their Chinese subjects, but they adhered to a different version of it, and it is this version that Yanglian may have attempted to impose on Feilaifeng. According to Edwards the "authoritarian nature of Yuan sculpture at the site is unmistakable", and images from the late thirteenth century prove this condition.[339]

Indeed, the Longhong cave images are followed in the next decade by sculptures of deities with ever-stronger Tibetan connections. They include such figures as Kuvera, the god of riches, and Virupa, a deity of the exact line of Tibetan Buddhism that had been adopted by the Mongol rulers.

However, there were two further developments at Feilaifeng during the Yuan that add a sense of balance to the idea that the aim of Yanglian's project was solely Tibetan domination. First, one of the major Yuan activities at Feilaifeng was the refurbishment of earlier caves. This stands in sharp contrast with Yanglian Zhenjia's notorious actions in Hangzhou proper. There, he destroyed not only Song palaces, but temples and images as well.[340] His attempts to preserve Feilaifeng may indicate a wish to gradually integrate the Yuan images into the site, rather than have them

[339] Edwards 1984: 10.
[340] Yang restored over 30 Buddhist temples between 1285-1287. However, he replaced their images with images of Tibetan Buddhism---see Edwards 1984: n 10.

radically replace earlier sculpture. A second, major point is a Yuan sculpture at Feilaifeng of Budai. Edwards discusses this image, located in a niche near the Longhong cave and carved in the late thirteenth-century style of the Kuvera image, only briefly. Edwards believes the work to be a comparatively formal interpretation of the deity.

Indeed, compared to Feilaifeng's main icon today, a Southern Song image of Budai reclining amidst a band of Arhats, the Yuan Budai is less conspicuous. Yet, both sculptures unambiguously adhere to the basic characteristics of the artistic theme of the eccentrics. The Southern Song Budai does this most explicitly. This laughing monk is shown loosely leaning on his right arm, fingers spread over an enormous boulder that could represent a supporting cushion. Budai is surrounded by a group of eighteen Arhats shown with twisting and turning bodies and faces. The Yuan Budai is seated in an upright position. Nevertheless, this image too shows the deity laughing with an open mouth, while his robes open up to reveal a huge bulging stomach. His hands and feet are not unlike those of the Song Budai either: they are carved into soft and round forms, and he holds a chain of beads in his left hand. Both sculptures correspond to contemporaneous paintings of Budai. While the sense of movement may be more overt in the Song example, the Yuan Budai can easily be compared to a painting of the monk by Liang Kai, presently in the Shanghai Museum. This painting shows the upper half of Budai. He is seated upright, laughing with an open mouth, and the sturdy form of his body immediately recalls the Yuan sculpture in stone. Thematically, both sculptures arguably describe aspects of Budai that affect the understanding of Feilaifeng, and of the Chan eccentric.

### *Budai at Feilaifeng*

Howard believes that the worship of Budai in the Song and Yuan dynasties is comparable to the worship of two Tang and Song monks, Sengqie 僧伽 (629-710) and Daoji.[341] Sengqie, an early Tang monk, was venerated in the Song as an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Guanyin. Daoji, an eccentric who lived in the Chan temples of Lingyin and Jingci, was worshiped as a miracle worker and became a subject of popular fiction. Comparing their images to the Feilaifeng Budai, Howard writes that

[341] Howard 2006.

from the Song onwards, Buddhist iconography became more concerned with everyday life. The growing importance of folk traditions resulted in an effort by the Buddhist establishment to humanize and popularize Buddhist figures and doctrines.[342] I agree with Howard that it is possible to compare the concept of Budai in texts and images, or, for that matter, all Chan wandering saints, including Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan, to representations of other venerated monks. Simultaneously, I would point out the curious differences between certain Chan saints and other worshiped monks. For instance, like Daoji, in Song and Yuan literature, Budai becomes an important subject. In the mid-fourteenth century, the Chan abbot Mengtan Tan'e (act. 1339-1357) published the *Mingzhou Dingyin dashi Budai heshang zhuan*, the longest independent Budai story ever compiled. Also, in the thirteenth century, Budai is celebrated in a play by the writer Zeng Tingyu.[343] However, unlike Daoji, Budai is included in several lists of "wandering saints" in Chan texts of the thirteenth century. These lists always include Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan, and some of them mention that all these saints are incarnations of Bodhisattvas.

The lists are not the only distinction between particular Chan saints and other monks. Some of these lists include Daoist immortals as well. Also, some Chan saints on these lists are not considered to be Bodhisattvas, which would put them more on a par with Daoji. For instance, the monk Yan Fanhua is listed in the *Extensive Record of the Flame of the Tiansheng Era*, compiled during his lifetime, as a "wandering saint", but not as a Bodhisattva.

The special nature of Budai, Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan is best understood in combination with their artistic representations. Howard's example of Sengqie is a case in point. Sengqie is shown in sculptures in cave shrines as a calm monk in deep meditation. In contrast, Budai knows a variety of appearances in different materials. He is shown in paintings and in engravings on steles.[344] In sculpture, Budai is not only part of cave temples, but, since the Song dynasty, his images are also placed in the entrance halls of temples, guarded by the guardians of the four directions. In all these different materials, Budai may be shown alone as a wandering saint, or in the company of children or Arhats. Budai is first mentioned as followed by sixteen children in the thirteenth-century *Fozu tongji*, and a Ming painting currently in the

[342] Howard's arguments here are comparable to those of Bernard Faure ---see Chapter One.
[343] I consider Song and Yuan literature on the eccentrics in section two of this chapter.
[344] I do not know of any paintings or engravings of Sengqie.

Boston Museum of Fine Arts is one of many examples of this sub-theme in art. Budai himself appears as one of sixteen Arhats in the Zizhu Nunnery in present day Jiangsu province, but more often he is surrounded by them, as in Feilaifeng.

Budai is not the only Chan eccentric with such a variety of appearances. As noted in Chapter Two, in painting, Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan are similarly shown in different forms, together or separately, engaged in all kinds of activities. I have found no early sculptural representations of these three monks, but Hanshan and Shide are engraved on a Qing dynasty stele in the Hanshan temple in Suzhou, which could point to earlier practices. Beyond the Chan establishment, Hanshan and Shide are also known as the "Two Gods of Riches" (*hehe erxian*) in folk religion.[345] I discuss the Qing rubbing, and the eccentrics as part of local beliefs below.

From the above comparison, it is clear that the boundaries between categories of monks, legendary sages and Bodhisattvas are blurred in Song and Yuan texts and images. At the same time it seems that some of these saints, including Budai, Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan, are credited with more capacities than others. They appear in different forms on different materials and can be monk, eccentric, sage, saint, Bodhisattva and immortal at the same time.[346] It is puzzling why these particular monks would have been understood to accommodate all these different levels of spirituality. While historicity is not an issue, it is striking that in the late Song and early Yuan dynasties, Budai, Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan all belonged to a near past: the Tang dynasty. This period belonged to the past, but at the same time it was not as distant from the Song and Yuan eras as other, ancient dynasties. Thus, beside Daoji, Budai, Fenggan, Hanshan and Shide all belonged to an historical age, yet compared to ancient Chan patriarchs, such as Bodhidharma, they were fairly recent. This location in time may have supported the popularity of legends surrounding the monks: it estranged the eccentrics from their admirers and devotees, leaving composers with enough space to formulate stories about them; at the same time the eccentrics did not belong to a past too distant for Song and Yuan society to conceive of properly. In addition, each of the Chan eccentrics represents unique characteristics. While Fenggan, Hanshan and Shide are eternal recluses, Budai dwells among people in

[345] The only reference for this is in Eberhard: 142.
[346] Faure argues that the Chan eccentrics developed into Bodhisattvas gradually, but there is no reason to assume that clear divisions were made between these different appearances ---see also Chapter One.

market places. Thus, each saint symbolizes different kinds of values, in response to different kinds of devotees. I will return to this point in Chapter Five.

At Feilaifeng, both Budai images are, in a way, surrounded by Arhats. In the Song composition, Budai may actually represent the Future Buddha Maitreya: in Buddhist texts, the historical Buddha requests the Arhats to expect the advent of the future Buddha and the Song Budai seems to be waited upon by Arhats showing their respect. The Yuan Budai stands alone, yet it is part of a site where Arhat veneration was important, as can be deduced from the earliest images and inscriptions. It is as yet not clear which aspect of Budai the Yuan image represents. What is clear, is that the Yuan sponsors of Feilaifeng considered the representation of this eccentric significant. As such, the Yuan project at Feilaifeng is not so different from earlier projects at Longmen and Dazu, discussed above. As in Longmen, Yanglian Zhenjia supervised the carving of particular themes that would serve the purpose of his rulers. At the same time, not unlike Zhao Zifeng in Dazu, he mixed Tibetan views of Buddhism with local and orthodox traditions that favoured the symbol of the Arhat, and such saints as Budai.

It is most likely that Feilaifeng was open to the public from the beginning. For the early period, evidence for this is provided by repeated inscriptions of later visitors. In the Yuan, too, there is no reason to assume that the site would have been closed: while Feilaifeng is an imperially sponsored site, unlike Longmen there are no imperial family caves. Further, the location of the caves exactly opposite the Lingyin temple would have guaranteed a steady stream of visitors. Thus, at Feilaifeng, the eccentric Budai appears in a form that is comparable to, yet at the same time very different from, representations of this monk in painting. This phenomenon is echoed in another medium for representations of the eccentrics, the engraved stele.

## CHINESE STELES AND THE FAWANG TEMPLE RUBBING

Museum collections in Asia, the United States and Europe today hold at least three different Song and Yuan rubbings from engraved steles of the Chan eccentric Budai (Figs. 26-28). In addition, there is a Qing dynasty rubbing from a stele showing Hanshan and Shide in the Tsuganedera in Japan (Fig. 29). Each of these four rubbings is part of a long tradition of steles in China. Simultaneously, all four rubbings are unique examples of this tradition. First, for at least three of the four rubbings, there is

sufficient evidence to support the idea that they were used in a Buddhist context. However, if we think of them as “Buddhist steles”, we note that they were made in a period when this type of art ceased to be a vital art form. If we do not consider the rubbings as “Buddhist”, they still describe a fascinating connection between art and faith, or, more specifically, between different artistic media, contexts of donation and viewing, and the theme of the eccentric. In the following, I will first introduce the tradition of steles with attention to function and style. Next, I will focus on the rubbing as a source for the copying of texts and images. Here, an interesting comparison can be made between rubbings of eccentrics and issues of replication in medieval Japanese Buddhism. I will show that the rubbings are evidence for a wider understanding of the eccentrics as Chan monks, sages and powerful, tangible religious icons at the same time. As an aesthetic form and as a concept, the Chan eccentric appears across different artistic media and social groups; arguably, their representations bring these different groups together.

### *The stele tradition in China*

The stele tradition in China goes back to ancient times. In *Chinese Steles*, Dorothy Wong describes this artistic medium from its earliest developments to its high point in the fifth and sixth centuries CE.[347] Although titled “Chinese Steles”, Wong’s focus is in fact on the development of Buddhist steles in China; she argues that the stele was ground for the Buddhist synthesis with Chinese religious and funerary beliefs.

Chinese steles were first used in nature worship, where the upright stone slab represented the earth spirit. From its beginning, the stele was connected to religious organizations: it commemorated the religious and social identity of an association of devotees. In the Han dynasty, the flat slab acquired commemorative and funerary functions associated with the scholar-official class. Thus, Wong writes, the Buddhist appropriation of the Chinese stele is evidence for this religion’s successful integration in China. As early as in the Western Jin dynasty (265-316), Chinese tablets were used in Buddhist contexts, where they appeared on ceramic pots in tombs.[348] The slabs were part of the decoration of these funerary jars, which also included images of the Buddha and auspicious deities, and architectural structures. In early Buddhist cave

[347] Wong 2004.
[348] Huang 1993.

sites such as Longmen, steles record names of donors just as Han slabs record the names of its sponsors. Also, among the donors we find the names of foreign, Wei rulers as well as Chinese aristocrats. Combined with Buddhist images, the texts turn these steles into visual statements of an artificial political and cultural solidarity.

The majority of the early Buddhist steles were created by religious associations, in villages as well as in cities over wide geographical areas in northern China.[349] In a study of stele inscriptions, Liu Shufen discusses the nature of these associations, and the popularity of the stele.[350] Religious associations consisted of officials as well as commoners, and of men and women. Under the leadership of a member of the clergy, these associations would engage in religious as well as social activities: they would copy and chant sūtras and organize festivals, but they would also build bridges and plant trees. Organizations could order steles from workshops, where they were often mass-produced leaving just enough space for donors to carve their names.[351] Also, the stele was often the focus of religious activity: clergy preached the doctrine using this medium, while devotees walked around the image in circumambulation. Many steles were erected on holy days, and assemblies were held after the completion of an image. As was the case for other devotional art, eyes of images on steles would be opened in a rite to bring the image to life, and devotees would visualize and recite texts and images on the stele as part of religious practice.

Issues concerning the donation and function of early Buddhist steles are important for understanding similar issues for the original steles from which the four extant eccentric rubbings were made, a point to which I will return in more detail below. In addition, Buddhist steles also have an important aesthetic component. Wong shows how the iconography of early steles reveals a commingling of Buddhist elements and elements from nature worship. Between the Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Tang dynasty, images increasingly describe Chinese interpretations of the Buddhist doctrine, including the most popular sūtras of the time: the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Sūtra of Vimalakīrti*. Due to the widespread production of Chinese Buddhist steles mentioned above, Liu rightly observes that studying these

[349] In addition, Sichuan has a tradition of stele engravings, too.
[350] Liu 1995. In addition to steles, texts from Dunhuang, too, provide a lot of information on religious associations and their activities. See for instance Ch' en, Mair and Gernet.
[351] Liu mentions that during the Wei, there were state efforts to control the spending of money on statuary constructions, indicating the popularity of Buddhist sculpture and steles at the time.

iconographical data and inscriptions on steles can "help to understand which scriptures were transmitted to the masses, and which deities were most popular".

Wong notices a development in Buddhist steles at the beginning of the Tang dynasty:

> After China became unified under the Sui and the Tang, Buddhist steles ceased to be a vital art form. Although a few large Buddhist steles continued to be made, the majority were miniature Buddhist steles dedicated by individuals. Other steles with Buddhist content were also made, though in formal terms they reverted back to the pre-Buddhist mode of emphasizing the written word rather than imagery.[352]

Wong believes that the "demise of a Buddhist tradition of steles in China" shows that after several hundred years of integration, the religion was "fully assimilated into Chinese society and institutions". A most interesting example that can serve as evidence is the case of the steles erected for the famous Tang monk Xuanzang. The Tang emperors Taizong (r. 624-649) and Gaozong (r. 650-683) wrote essays for Xuanzang's translation of Buddhist texts, which were written up by the famous Tang calligrapher Chu Suiliang (596-658). Buddhist monks then requested that these two texts be carved on steles. The texts were carved again on another tablet in 672, this time in the style of China's exemplary calligrapher, Wang Xizhi. This signals a transformation in the Buddhist stele, which now again appears as the ultimate expression of a Chinese cultural and aesthetic taste.

*The eccentrics on stele rubbings*

The four extant eccentric rubbings derive from the Chinese stele tradition outlined above, but simultaneously, each rubbing illustrates an aspect of this tradition that is comparatively understudied and requires further investigation. First, in the light of Wong's analysis of the "demise of the Buddhist stele", I find that the three Song and Yuan rubbings show that this tradition was still very much alive, albeit on a smaller scale. A rubbing of Budai dated to 1223 currently in the Academia Sinica in Taibei stands out in particular (Fig. 26). This rubbing shows the large chubby Chan eccentric carrying a bag across his shoulder. The inscription above the picture reads:

[352] Wong 2004: 178.

> Budai's leather bag contains the world of the dharma. He strolls through heavens and hells. He follows his destiny rubbing shoulders with butchers, winesellers and prostitutes. Shouldering his staff he begs everywhere and receives what he needs. Pitying the people of his time, he has not yet chosen to return from the darkness of this world to Tusita heaven, but stays in the midst of confusion in the stalls and the shouting of the market place.
>
> In the year guiwei of the Yuanguang era (1223), the elder of the Fawang temple, Zhao Gong, had this picture made. With the financial help of many young people, the warden of the temple, Wen Zhen and the priest Dexin had it engraved.[353]

The inscription on this stele is similar to inscriptions on early Buddhist steles: the stele is a donation by a group of people headed by members of the clergy. What is exceptional is that the main and, in fact, only image on this stele is not a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, but an eccentric monk. The inscription is a detailed narrative of Budai's story as a wandering saint. Also, even though the text points out that he is the lord of Tusita heaven, the abode of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, Budai is not depicted in the form of a Bodhisattva, but he resembles the form in which he appears on innumerable paintings---the lively, eccentric monk.

In an article on the iconography of Budai, Peter Glum compares the Fawang temple rubbing to a rubbing of the same monk presently in the Princeton University Art Museum (Fig. 27). Glum notices that Budai does not laugh in this rubbing, and he believes that this indicates the existence of a different category of illustrations in which the eccentric may be shown with a very different expression. It is quite possible that there are two iconographies for Budai, one that shows him scowling, and the other, grinning. Both iconographies result in expressive facial features, and are as such compatible with the general characteristics of this artistic theme outlined in Chapter Two above. Therefore, for this argument, it is interesting to consider another major aspect of the Princeton rubbing. This rubbing contains an inscription, originally by Su Shi, that attributes the painting on which the engraving and the rubbing are based to the Northern Song court painter Cui Bo. The 1088 inscription reads:

> In the Xining era (1068-1077) the painting master Cui Bo showed me this portrait of Budai. The brush is clear and truly antique and marvelous, even surpassing Wu [Daozi].[354]

[353] Glum 1985: 109. The Fawang temple rubbing is in fact a Jin dynasty (1115-1234) rubbing. The location of the Fawang temple is unknown.
[354] Barnhart 1972: 151.

In this inscription, Su Shi is very appreciative of Cui Bo, briefly mentioned in Chapter Three. Cui, primarily known as a painter of flowers and birds, was favored by other critics, too. The emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1067-1085) commissioned him to paint the walls of palaces and temples in the capital Kaifeng, and both Northern and Southern Song art-historical texts positively comment on his "untrammeled" personality and style. At the same time, his work elicited negative assessment: the literatus and calligrapher Mi Fu, a friend of Su Shi, described Cui's painting as "fit only to defile the walls of a teahouse or wineshop". Still, Mi was not opposed to paintings of eccentrics, and his comments were based on a general disregard for court painters and followers of the Tang painter Wu Daozi. Su Shi, too, admired paintings of eccentrics. In addition to Cui Bo's painting, he inscribed another illustration of Budai by the painter Cang Zhen, noted in Chapter Three. Moreover, Su Shi himself painted an image of Budai that was subsequently inscribed with a poem by the Chan abbot Juefan Huihong. With regard to the Princeton rubbing, a more urgent question is perhaps why its original painting was ever turned into an engraving. It is not clear when this was done, nor do we know anything about the donors. It is likely that the sponsors of the engraving of this painting regarded it as highly important and wished to preserve it. In Chinese art history, there are many examples of engravings and rubbings that, in line and form, remind a viewer strongly of painting. However, to my knowledge, there are not many rubbings for which it is authoritatively claimed that they are direct copies of specific paintings. The donors may have been admirers of Cui Bo or Su Shi who wished to have their painting and calligraphy copied, but it is not unlikely that the Princeton rubbing's stele functioned in much the same way as the Taibei Budai's stele---in a context in which the Chan eccentric was the focus of attention.

The third rubbing of Budai under discussion in this section is now in the collection of the Museo d'Arte Cinese di Parma (Fig. 28). Dated to the Yuan dynasty, this rubbing shows the eccentric looking back at a skull lying on the ground in the bottom right-hand corner. A cloud rises up from Budai's head, on which there is an image of a seated Buddha. According to the Museo d'Arte Cinese di Parma's records, the inscription on the lower right, now unreadable, says that the stele from which the rubbing was made was commissioned by a lady pilgrim at the Shaolin monastery in 1209. This rubbing describes yet another aspect of the relation between artistic media

such as painting and stonework, in the context of the theme of the Chan eccentric. The rubbing can be directly connected to a category of Budai paintings mentioned in the discourse records of Chan abbots. As discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, Chan abbots wrote appreciative inscriptions on paintings of Chan eccentrics, which were subsequently collected in their discourse records. In the records of some abbots, these inscriptions are organized according to the compositional form of the painting. For paintings of Budai, Yoshiaki Shimizu lists the following compositional types:

> Budai crossing the river
> Budai viewing the moon
> Budai asleep
> Budai pointing at the Buddha in the air
> Budai with a skull
> Budai laughing at a skull
> Budai carrying his bag and turning his head
> Budai dragging along his bag and turning his head
> Budai carrying his bag, turning his head, a child pulling at his garment
> Budai sneezing
> Budai leaning against his bag in contemplation
> Budai taking a bath in a river [355]

According to Shimizu, this literary evidence can be "corroborated by a handful of existing Chinese Budai paintings from the middle of the thirteenth century", preserved in Japan, which he lists as well. Strikingly, in painting, there is no example of an extant illustration of "Budai with a skull" or "Budai laughing at a skull". However, this compositional type does survive, in the form of a rubbing. Thus, the Yuan rubbing enables us to consider a theme important for paintings of the Chan establishment in a medium not generally studied in conjunction with those paintings.

In her discussion of the style of early Buddhist steles, Wong contends that figural styles and landscapes of early steles should be seen as the beginnings of developments that find fuller expression in Tang sculpture and painting, and in the landscapes of the Five Dynasties and the Song. Due to the scarcity of contemporaneous paintings, it is almost impossible to compare themes and styles of early steles to similar themes and styles in other media. In contrast, the Yuan rubbing of Budai compares easily to Yuan paintings and sculptures of the same theme. Together, representations in these different media underscore the importance of the

[355] Shimizu 1974: 195.

Chan eccentric, not just for the Chan establishment, but for wider circles in Song and Yuan society.

Considering the period in which it was made, the Qing rubbing is chronologically outside the scope of this study (Fig. 29). Still, this image of Hanshan and Shide can elucidate some of the issues at play in the Song and Yuan rubbings, too. Most importantly, the Tsuganedera rubbing is a construction that involves several layers of image-making and image-viewing. The Qing rubbing shows Hanshan and Shide in conversation. The monks are laughing, and their robes hang loosely around their bodies. The engraving from which this rubbing was made is part of the Hanshan temple in Suzhou, and a copy of a painting by the Qing artist Luo Pin 羅聘 (1733-1799) (Fig. 30). The engraving also contains a long inscription in the calligraphy of Yu Yue (1821-1907), a modern calligrapher.

Text and image on this rubbing are the result of several stages of replication and cooperation between different artists, which affect viewing practices. Luo Pin's original painting is currently in the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, where it is not always available for viewing. In contrast, the same image on the stele in Suzhou draws hundreds of visitors every year, many of them from Japan. As one of the main attractions of the Hanshan temple, the image on the stele is replicated not only through rubbings, but also on souvenirs such as T-shirts and coins.

I will consider viewers and viewing practices in more detail in Chapter Five. At this point we will take a closer look at one of the most important aspects of steles: the issue of replication.

### *Issues of replication: images and icons*

In addition to a source for preservation, Chinese steles are also an ideal medium for replication. While the stele usually remains part of a sacred space, such as a Confucian or Buddhist temple, rubbings of its texts and images, such as the four rubbings discussed above, can be made in unlimited numbers, and distributed to wider areas. In *Zenkōji and Its Icon*, Donald McCallum studies a tradition of replication in medieval Japan.[356] McCallum's views on concepts of images and their replica's are helpful for understanding ways in which viewers of eccentric rubbings might have

[356] McCallum 1994.

understood this art, and the Chan wandering saints. Hence, they will be briefly introduced below.

Also, in his research, McCallum proposes that attention be directed to a broader range of religious icons, and away from the seductiveness of so-called great works. This is not just applicable in a medieval Japanese context, but for the art of Song and Yuan China, too. For images of Chan eccentrics in particular, the investigation of comparatively less-studied media such as sculptures and rubbings reveals the importance of the Chan monks within the context of a more general belief in the power of particular saints.

The Zenkōji icon is a triad of gilt bronze images of the Buddha Amitābha, and the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. According to the Zenkōji myth, this icon flew from India to the Paekche Kingdom in Korea and then further to Japan, where it settled in the Zenkōji temple in the present-day city of Nagano. According to the myth, the icon saves believers from hell, and ensures their rebirth in paradise.

At Zenkōji, the Amitābha triad was totally hidden, even from the priests who took care of the image and performed worship in front of it. In fact, it is questionable whether the image existed at all. One of Japan's earliest narratives, the *Story of Heike* (*Heike monogatari*) reports that in 1179, there was a big fire at the temple, which may have destroyed its main image. Still, to believers in medieval Japan and today, the triad was, and is, an actual, powerful image.

Importantly, from the Kamakura period onwards, the Zenkōji triad was copied numerous times and taken to temples across Japan. Over 200 examples of sculptural icons of Zenkōji affiliation survive, in addition to many more that must have been lost over the centuries. McCallum writes that itinerant religious practitioners (*hijiri* 聖) were responsible for the nation-wide dissemination of this image. These were monks that did not belong to any particular temple or monastery, but moved from sacred site to sacred site. The monks would establish new temples based on copies of the Zenkōji triad, known as "New Zenkōji Temples". The images in the new temples were worshiped through rituals similar to those used at the main shrine. Due to the influence of the *hijiri* at the main shrine and in the new temples, these rituals had a strong folk-religious component. Priests and priestesses communicated with the otherworld and rites of passage, such as spending a night at the temple, were held in

many shrines next to activities of orthodox Buddhist practice such as chanting and the recitation of sūtras.

McCallum argues that the Zenkōji triad and its replications challenge the history of sculpture to date. These images have been of little interest to conventional art-historical analysis. They lack dramatic aesthetic qualities, and, as copies of a main image, they do not describe evolutions in style or iconography. In fact, McCallum finds it difficult to apply the term "art" to the images he studies. Aesthetic motivations were not primary in the production of these sculptures, even though evidently, they were made with care.

For the Zenkōji image, McCallum's intention is to shift the focus from works of art thought of in aesthetic terms to icons, conceptualized in terms of religious function. He believes that the Zenkōji cult was an iconic cult "even though within the slightly peculiar context of a totally hidden main image". Icons are usually known through their most common historical association, as paintings of holy persons of Orthodox Christianity. They are associated with Christianity's doctrine of salvation and are believed to have mystical or magical properties. McCallum finds that this term is appropriate for the Zenkōji image: the neutral "image" or "sculpture" would not capture its intense religious resonance. He believes at least three conceptions of the meaning of the "icon" are valid for the Zenkōji cult: the icon as a representation or likeness of the deity, the icon as symbol of the deity and the icon as the deity. These conceptions affected the main triad as much as they affected the replications. For instance, to allow the religious belief system to function properly, they would require the replicas to be exact copies of the main image, and they would inhibit stylistic experimentation.

Aspects of the Zenkōji cult of an image and its replicas are comparable to the tradition of steles and rubbings of Chan eccentrics in Song and Yuan China. Here too, we find a main image as the source for numerous, exact copies. While the eccentric steles were perhaps never hidden, and may not have been subjected to such elaborate rituals as the Zenkōji triad, they too can be regarded as religious icons. The Fawang temple rubbing may serve as an example. This image was created by a group of devotees who believed in the presence and power of Budai. Visually, as in paintings of the eccentrics, the focus on the Fawang stele and on other steles is on the monks only. Practically, copies of the steles in the form of rubbings would multiply the presence of this deity, and provide devotees with a tangible connection to the main

image. This connection would be deepened by returning to the main image. Today still, the Zenkōji temple receives large numbers of pilgrims. Similarly, although the Tsuganedera temple holds a rubbing of the engraving at the Hanshan temple in Suzhou, modern-day Japanese tourists return to China every year to view the original stele.

## 2. THE ECCENTRICS IN SONG AND YUAN TEXTS

In the Song and Yuan dynasties the eccentrics were a popular theme in a wide variety of texts, including texts of traditions other than the Chan establishment. These texts include hagiographies of saints, alchemy texts, commentaries on poetry, and plays. Below I divide these records into two main categories: lyrical verse and other belles lettres of the Song and the Yuan, and texts that substantiated the Daoist claim on Hanshan.

In the Song dynasty, we can detect an interest for Hanshan as a poet. Literati commented on his work, and poems of Hanshan were part of imperial collections. However, the comments were restricted to careful appreciations, and were not collected in writers' collective works. Also, remarkably, Hanshan's poems were not included in the Chan canon until the Qing dynasty. These facts indicate that while Song society was aware of Hanshan's poetic oeuvre, his work was probably regarded as too independent by any standards, for polite society as well as the Chan establishment. Instead, Song and Yuan society responded to the personae of Hanshan and other eccentric monks, who featured in collections of tales of the strange, in plays and in art. Below I consider how the monks appealed to people across religious and social categories in these different media. Additionally, Hanshan was subjected to an emphatic Daoist claim which dates back to at least the ninth century. In the Song Daoist canon he features in three texts, in which he is considered an immortal, an alchemist and a saint.

By dividing the eccentrics into topics of interest for the Chan establishment, discussed in previous chapters, and for the Daoist canon and Song and Yuan literature under discussion here, I do not aim to underscore differences between institutions in early modern China. On the contrary, moving away from earlier scholarship, I argue that various religious and literary traditions were closely interwoven. Different perceptions of Chan eccentrics which developed simultaneously in distinct spheres

indicate that the connections between religious and literary currents were stronger than modern scholarship assumes. Furthermore, they describe a rich and comprehensive understanding of the Chan eccentric monk, who could represent a variety of concepts in any tradition. The Chan incorporation of the eccentric through texts and images is most explicit, but it is essential to remember that the monks remain part of the Daoist canon and general literature in the dynasties following the Song and the Yuan, up to the present day.

## TALES OF THE ECCENTRIC IN SONG AND YUAN LITERATURE

### *The poet Hanshan in the Tang and the Song*

Modern scholarship is divided with regard to dates for Hanshan and his poetic oeuvre. As has been shown in Chapter One, authors alternatively attribute this eccentric to the seventh or eighth centuries, and while some of his poems are considered to belong to the early Tang, others are dated to the end of the dynasty. Timothy Barrett proposes the idea that Hanshan's total of more than three hundred poems were "written by various hands over a span of time": three hundred was considered an ideal number for a poetry collection, and verses may have been added to an original core to make up this number.[357]

In contrast, traditional Chinese texts do not show the slightest concern with regard to discrepancies in the language of Hanshan's poems, or the problems of his date. The references to this eccentric and his work never doubt that Hanshan existed, that he spoke and acted in miraculous ways, and that he wrote all the poems attributed to him. In the discussion below it will become clear that this kind of approach was not limited to Hanshan, Budai or the other eccentric monks. Throughout, Chinese texts that deal with the strange feel no need to explain uncommon behaviour or unfamiliar situations. Such texts show that in Song and Yuan society, the otherworld was an extension of this-worldly experience. Nonetheless, it will become clear that the

[357] Barrett in Hobson 2003: 128. According to some accounts, Fenggan and Shide wrote poetry, too. Shide's poems can be dated to as late as the Northern Song, and Robert Borgen suggests that the name Shide, translated as 'gleanings', may originally have referred to poems in the Hanshan manner. Eventually, Shide was transformed into a poet, and the story of the foundling eccentric was created to explain his unusual name. See Borgen 1991: 575.

cultural position of Hanshan's poetic oeuvre was problematic throughout the Song, Yuan and Ming periods.

Wu Chi-yu writes that as early as in the ninth century, the name Hanshan is mentioned in at least three authors' works.[358] However, only one of these records refers to the poet-monk. In his poem *To Liang the judge, from a house in the mountains* (*Shanzhong ji Liang panguan* 山中寄梁判官), Li Shanfu 李山甫 (fl. 874) writes

> Hanshanzi also should have felt that he had been too talented not to write poems.[359]

Notably, the other two poems, by Zhang Ji 張繼 (eighth century) and Wei Yingwu 韋應物(732-792), a native of Suzhou, mention the Hanshan temple in Suzhou, and do not refer to the eccentric Hanshan.

Similarly, in the Northern Song, the politician and reformer Wang Anshi wrote twenty poems entitled "Imitating Hanshan and Shide".[360] In the Southern Song, Zhu Xi (1130-1200), the famous thinker and reformer of Confucianism, remarked positively on Hanshan, as did the statesman and poet Lu You (1125-1210).[361] However, remarkably, these poems and appreciations were never collected in the Song writers' *Collected Works*. This leads Barrett to believe that "the literature of poetic criticism may not have deemed Hanshan's poems worthy of discussion".

While I agree that Hanshan's poems were not part of the Song belles lettres, to regard them as "deemed unworthy of discussion" may be too narrow a characterization. I would argue that the private contexts in which poems and appreciations were dedicated to Hanshan indicate that polite society found it difficult to position this monk and his work in existing literary traditions. Most interestingly, evidence for this assumption is provided by the Chan establishment, which reveals a similar reluctance in its appropriation of Hanshan's poems. According to Song Chan texts, from the ninth century onwards, several Chan monks show an interest in Hanshan's poems. The famous Chan master Linji Yixuan reportedly wrote responses to Hanshan's originals. Again, the Chan monk and painter Guanxiu, discussed in

[358] Wu 1957.
[359] Wu 1957: 394.
[360] Wu 1957: 445.
[361] Barrett in Hobson 2003: 144 n 73.

Chapter Three, also wrote poetry. In a poem entitled *To the Daoist Shu of Chisongshan* (*Ji chisong Shu daoshi* 寄赤松舒道士), he writes

> As you admire very much Hanshanzi,
> You must recite poems on 'Being happy with the dao'
> Perhaps one day you should accompany a prefect
> To some spot full of smoke and creeping plants[362]

According to the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks*, the monk Caoshan Benji commented on more than 200 poems by Hanshan, and his work was popular throughout the country. Similarly, the monk Yanzhao (896-973) quoted from Hanshan's oeuvre, and in the tenth century, Yongming Yanshou, author of *Records of the Source Mirror* cites Hanshan.[363] References to Hanshan as a poet and his work are found throughout the discourse records of Song Chan abbots, in the form of quotations in lectures and private interviews. This practice culminates in the work of the Yuan monk and poet Fanqi (1296-1370), who wrote poems that followed Hanshan's originals verse by verse. Still, strikingly, Hanshan's poems did not become part of the Song, Yuan or even Ming Chan canons. A collection of Hanshan's poems was inserted into a Chan canon only in 1579. Moreover, this was a privately sponsored canon, known as the Jingshan canon. It was not until the eighteenth century that the Yongzheng emperor (r. 1723-1735) added his own anthology of Chan literature to the government sponsored Chan canon, including 130 poems of Hanshan.

Barrett justly writes that this shows that Hanshan's poems were "too independent to pass as straightforwardly orthodox by Buddhist standards". In fact, the poems were too independent even to pass by Chan standards. Nishitani Keiji, discussed in Chapter One, also argues that Hanshan's writings cannot be treated as "Buddhist" or "Chan" poetry. Thus, it seems that Song polite society and the Chan establishment both had difficulty appropriating the poems of this eccentric monk. Nonetheless, Song society's problems with the poems of Hanshan should not keep us from investigating its intense engagement with his persona, or the personae of the other Chan eccentrics. Importantly, Hanshan and Budai feature in different types of texts and art, in which they assume different identities.

[362] Wu 1957: 394.
[363] Wu 1957: 445.

In 978 the newly-established Song dynasty published the *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era* (*Taiping guangji* 太平廣記), the largest imperial collection of tales of the strange in Chinese history. This compendium of about 7000 stories is a selection of texts from the Han to the Song period. The topic of most of the stories is supernatural, and concerns priests, immortals, ghosts and deities. The story of the eccentric Hanshan is part of this collection; it was selected from a compendium of Daoist immortals, now lost, by the famous Daoist priest and editor Du Guangting.

The *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era* adds to a tradition of collections of accounts of anomalies in China, which dates back to at least the Six Dynasties. In her study of collections of tales of the strange in late imperial China, Sing-chen Lydia Chiang discusses ways to interpret the acts of recording and collecting such stories.[364] She believes recording an anomaly (and thus considering it worthy of notice) accords it reality and power and harnesses its potency. Collections of records of the strange formulate new principles of normality and construct cultural and political norms. To illustrate this theory, she provides the example of a story of dogs in the sky in the *Extensive Records*, taken from the *Lives of Divine Immortals* by Ge Hong, famous author of a catalogue devoted to Daoist books. In this story the Daoist Liu An 劉安 attains immortality and ascends to heaven, followed by his dogs and chicken who also sail up to heaven after finishing Liu's elixir left in the courtyard. This story "effects paradigm change in what is perceived to be normal: ordinary dogs may not fly, but those owned by Daoist immortals can. Moral of the story: the superiority of Dao."

According to Chiang, this is the case for the *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era*, too. The stories of this compendium were taken out of their original contexts and classified according to a new scheme that "prescribes political and cosmic order, moral values and gender and social hierarchy". The *Extensive Records* begin with the category of "Divine Immortals" (*shenxian* 神仙) followed by female immortals, eccentric monks and many other categories, ending with "Miscellaneous Biographies" (*zazhuan* 雜傳) and "Miscellaneous Records" (*zalu* 雜錄). Also, the *Extensive Records* were not allowed to be widely disseminated. Chiang interprets this as

[364] Chiang 2005.

evidence for the double-edgedness of anomalies: they may be employed to construct imperial norm, and they may be used to deconstruct this norm at the same time.

Chiang is interested in how authors of collections construct identity through the activity of collecting. In her research, strange tales not only represent strange events, but describe an author's identity as a writer as well. Here, the "other" can be repulsive against the normality of the self, but it can also be used to challenge the cultural paradigm that dictates that the "other" is odd. Thus, Chiang suggests that Qing dynasty literati interest in the strange needs to be explored through issues of identity crises and problems of self-representation. Chiang does not further explore the issue of the influence of tales of the strange on everyday life. She writes that these texts had a marginal cultural status and moves on to investigate how they individualized their authors and compilers.

Still, tales of the strange were one of the most popular genres in Chinese literature, and their popularity encourages inquiry into how society may have experienced the supernatural. In spite of a prohibition to disseminate the *Extensive Records*, parts of this compendium leaked out, reflecting the general public's interest in this literature. Further, the *Extensive Records* inspired similar projects in the Southern Song, most famously the *Listener's Records* (*Yijianzhi* 夷堅志), the largest private collection of strange tales in Chinese history, compiled by Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202) between 1143 and 1198. The *Listener's Records* are the main source for Edward Davis' *Society and the Supernatural in Song China*.[365] While Chiang points out that the *Listener's Records* can be seen as Hong's "personal crusade to regulate the universe" (Hong develops a new classification system for his compilation), Davis is interested in the evidence that this text provides for the relation of Chinese society with the supernatural, and for the experience of the supernatural as an aspect of social relations. In particular, he focuses on spirit possession, and he explores this phenomenon by following in the *Listener's Records* the stories of priests at court, religious specialists without official posts, and village spirit-mediums. Importantly, Davis argues, this approach prevents analyses in terms of social and religious groups such as "Confucian", "Buddhist" or "Daoist", and it also avoids assumption of relationships between cultural and social categories, such as "Confucian scholars". Instead, Davis investigates interactions between a range of priests, masters and spirit-

[365] Davis 2001.

mediums ---who can be Daoist, Buddhist, officially sinecured or not--- and their equally varied clientele. On another level, this is also a study of how Daoism and Buddhism interact and conduct ritual exchange with local society.

Chiang's and Davis' perspectives offer ways to analyze the *Extensive Records* and the story of Hanshan in this text. This collection was simultaneously a Song imperial construct and a description of a belief in otherworldly beings, with practical effects. As an imperial construct, the compendium aimed to direct the interests of its readership in the strange. This reader's interest was neither unusual, nor a phenomenon unique to the Song. In a study of Tang exotics, Edward Schafer describes the interest in unfamiliar objects and persons in the Tang by considering, among other things, sacred objects and books.[366] In this dynasty, relics fetched great prices in public markets and wealthy individuals and institutions imported images from foreign places. Foreign scripts and books about foreign lands were in circulation during the Tang, and private collectors could own tens of thousands of scrolls. According to Schafer, from the ninth century onwards, we can detect a vogue for the exotic in literature as ancient wonder tales gain new life, a trend that clearly continues into the Song.

At the same time the *Extensive Records* describe the realities of wider beliefs across official traditions and social categories where the stories of personalities such as Hanshan are translated into texts and art, both Chan and non-Chan. Notably, in the *Extensive Records*, Hanshan is not placed in the category of "Eccentric Monks", but in the very first section of "Divine Immortals". This categorization differs radically from other contemporaneous understandings of Hanshan as a Chan saint or a poet. Such a major difference underscores that what society perceived Hanshan to be was subject to influence, change and reconsideration.

### *Tales of Budai in literature and on stage*

In the thirteenth century, Budai had a major role in a theatre piece. The entry of this eccentric into the public space of the stage can be seen as evidence for his acceptance as a prominent deity in wider beliefs.

The legends surrounding Budai stand out among the literature on wandering saints in the Song and the Yuan. Stories of Budai are extremely colourful and have

[366] Schafer 1963.

been reproduced in several Chan texts including the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* and the *Transmission of the Flame Records of the Jingde Era*, as well as in the *Fozu tongji*, a text of the Tiantai school. If we consider the eccentric Budai to be, like Hanshan, part of wider beliefs in otherworldly beings, the Tiantai text need not surprise us. In fact, following this trend, the *Fozu tongji* also mentions Hanshan and Shide, as part of a list of wandering saints and Bodhisattvas. Other contemporaneous literature concerning Budai underscores this point. The monk is mentioned in a poem of the Song emperor Gaozong, and in an inscription by the literatus Huang Tingjian on a painting of Budai by his friend Su Shi. Of course, Su Shi himself wrote a poem on Budai on a painting of this monk that he saw, discussed in Chapters Two and Three. Finally, the Chan abbot Mengtan Tan'e collected legends of Budai scattered across different sources and published them together in a separate hagiography entitled "Hagiology of the Monk Budai, the Great Teacher of Dingying, Mingzhou". The publication of this text and the fact that it knew several sequels testifies to the popularity of the Budai narrative and its continuous appeal to successively wider circles.

Ferdinand Lessing and Yoshiaki Shimizu discuss some of the most popular tales of Budai, which concern his eccentric behaviour during his lifetime as well as supernatural events after his death.[367] Compared to Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan, Budai's hagiography is exceptionally detailed. Importantly, it provides names of places and dates for his lifetime: all sources write that he was a native of Siming in Northern Zhejiang province and that he died in the early tenth century. Also, while Hanshan and his friends left us only with poems and footprints, and disappeared mysteriously into emptiness, Budai's death is elaborately recorded: he passed away seated in meditation on a rock outside the Yuelin temple in Mingzhou, or present-day Ningbo. At this temple, a pagoda was erected marking his tomb, and his flask of celadon and mendicant's staff with six rings were inserted into it as relics. The story does not end here, as in the Shaoxing era (1131-1162) the relics are excavated after a strange light appears from the ground.

In addition to the relics, many other objects and persons are associated with this monk, and some return in his artistic representations. For instance, a hemp bag, in which he alternatively carries food, bricks or rubbish, is Budai's best-known attribute.

[367] Lessing 1942 and Shimizu 1974.

Also, according to the *Fozu tongji*, groups of children chased Budai on the streets to ridicule him; in art these children often accompany Budai, representing aspects of Buddhist philosophy such as the six senses.

On the issue of Budai in art, Mengtan's hagiography notes that Budai was opposed to the painting of his likeness: during his lifetime, he spat on a portrait of himself on a wall of the storehouse of a temple by a certain Lu. After his death, Budai appeared to the magistrate Wang Renxu and handed him a poem and a note that said that he was the Buddha Maitreya, and that his portrait should not be painted. Nonetheless, in 1070 Wang's grandson had Budai's portrait engraved, together with the poem, but without the note prohibiting the image. A second engraving of Budai's portrait and poem was made for the Yuelin temple, although the abbot of this temple eventually removed Budai's portrait to honour the saint's wish.

Still, in the eleventh century, Budai's portrait was already very popular. The *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* notes that there were different fashions for Budai paintings, and the *Transmission of the Flame Records of the Jingde Era* mentions a full-length portrait of the monk in the eastern hall of the Yuelin temple. Between 1103 and 1106 a clay statue of Budai was made for this temple and other accounts elaborate on illustrations of the monk in houses of individuals. For instance, the scholar Wang Zao (1079-1154) had a painting of Budai in his study which "was a famous painting", and he discussed its meaning with visiting Chan priests.[368]

The widespread dissemination of the legends of Budai and records of society's engagement with his persona in the form of poetry and portraits culminates in *The Tale of the Monk Budai and the Sign of Benevolence* (*Budai heshang ren zi ji*), a play by the playwright Zeng Tingyu (13th century). Neither Lessing nor Shimizu mention this play. Yet, this appearance of Budai is one of the best examples of the incorporation of this monk into the otherworldly beliefs of a wide audience.

The *Sign of Benevolence* was written as a comedy (*zaju* 雜劇). This type of drama, also known as "Northern Drama" had its roots in, among others, displays of acrobatic skills, martial arts and magic tricks known as "common entertainments" (*baixi* 百戲).[369] Performed in China since at least the Han dynasty, from which period there are tomb decorations illustrating these displays, the hundred entertainments were not necessarily always of a comic nature. The comedy developed in the Northern

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[368] Shimizu 1974: 176. I return to the portrait of Budai in the collection of Wang Zao in Chapter Five.
[369] Idema and West 1982.

Song, in conjunction with other types of performances, such as ballads, puppet shows and performances of story tellers. This drama became the dominant form of drama in the Song and Yuan periods.

In their exhaustive study of Chinese theatre from the 12th to 15th centuries, Wilt Idema and Stephen West describe the Song dynasty's flourishing theatre life. They write that theatres were located in so-called "pleasure precincts" located in different areas of the Song capitals and in other cities and towns. The theaters attracted audiences that numbered in the thousands on any given day and hailed from all kinds of backgrounds. Additionally, performances were held all over the city for the court and general public during festivals such as the New Year. While stage complexes of the Southern Song capital Lin'an were at first underdeveloped, this city soon became a center for art and entertainment, too. Idema and West list categories of performances in Lin'an, which include performances of poet laureates and members of the Painting Academy, tellers of sūtras and narrators of history, singers, archers, boxers and trainers of beasts. Of course performances were also held by traveling performers in villages in rural areas, and in religious institutions such as Buddhist temples.

The *Sign of Benevolence* follows the general pattern of plays in the Yuan, introduced in a study by Li Tche-houa.[370] It consists of four acts and a prologue. Dialogues are alternatively led by the main actor and a group of singers, who sing according to a particular musical mode and rhyme. Li writes that an orchestra accompanied these performances, and its principal instrument was the pipa. While the stage for these plays was simple, actors' costumes were elaborate.

Not much is known about the playwright Zeng, or about the actual performances of the *Sign of Benevolence*. Although based on the content of this play, which describes the life of an Arhat in exile, the *Sign of Benevolence* may be called a "Buddhist play", this piece may have been performed on any stage. The *Sign of Benevolence* is one of three "Buddhist plays" out of a total of six surviving plays by Zeng, who is noted in a 1330 register of playwrights a s a celebrated author. The content of this play has survived in its entirety. It concerns the Arhat Liu Junzuo, who is born as a householder because of a mistake he makes. Forgetting his true nature, he indulges in all kinds of passions until he meets Budai. The monk tells him that he is

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[370] Li 1963.

the Buddha Maitreya, and he traces the Chinese character for "benevolence" (*ren*) on the palm of Liu's hand. Liu finally understands the truth and vows to liberate all living beings, which will enable him to return to his place among Arhats.

The theatre was an extremely popular form of entertainment, especially from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. A play with a major part for Budai translated his story into a practical experience for varied audiences.

## THE DAOIST CLAIM

In the history of a tradition of Chan eccentric monks in Chinese texts and art, the Daoist appropriation of Hanshan stands out as a fascinating chapter. In fact, one of the earliest extant sources to mention Hanshan at all is a text by the eminent Du Guangting, mentioned above. Next, in the famous eleventh-century Daoist anthology *Cloudy Bookcase with Seven Labels* (*Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤), Hanshan is credited as the author of a text on alchemy. Again, in the twelfth century, he is included in a Daoist hagiography of saints, the *Records of the Multitude of Immortals of the Three Caverns* (*Sandong qunxian lu* 三洞群仙錄).

While Du Guangting's record of Hanshan survives only as an excerpt in the Song *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era*, the other two texts are part of the Daoist canon, the *Daozang* 道藏. Below, I will briefly introduce this canon, and consider views of Hanshan in each of these three texts. This section will also pay attention to art. In particular, it discusses two examples of paintings of the Chan eccentrics Hanshan and Shide shown together with Daoist immortals. The paintings can be dated to the Yuan and Ming dynasties, and I argue that their existence indicates what was once common practice in the Song too. Throughout the section, it will be clear that the Daoist texts and images under discussion should be seen in conjunction with texts and images of other, contemporaneous traditions, including the Chan establishment.

### *The Daoist canon*

The Daoist canon as it is known today is a collection of approximately 1500 works compiled and edited during a period of a thousand years, between the fifth and fifteenth centuries. It includes texts of Daoist philosophy, mysticism and liturgy, as

well as annals, hagiographies and exegeses. In a general introduction to an historical companion to the Daoist canon, Kristofer Schipper describes the process of the collection and distribution of texts for the canon, and significant changes in its organization.[371] Prior to the Ming dynasty, the organization of the canon describes degrees of initiation and transmission: the texts are divided according to a structure that reflects the individual's search for the truth, the mystery of Daoist liturgy and communication with the gods. The first inventory of Daoist scriptures using this structure was created by the Daoist master Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406-477), who presented it to the court of the Liu-Song dynasty (420-479). Lu grouped a selection of texts into three sections: the "Cavern Penetrating Truth" (*Dongzhen* 洞真), the "Cavern Penetrating Mystery" (*Dongxuan* 洞玄) and the "Cavern Penetrating Divinity" (*Dongshen* 洞神). The first cavern contained texts of Shangqing Daoism, and focused on practices for the individual to attain immortality. The second cavern centered around Lingbao Daoism, and its texts were meant to assist during collective religious services.[372] The third cavern was a collection of talismans, to be used for calling upon the gods.

In the Sui and Tang dynasties, again under imperial auspices, more texts were added to Lu's *Three Caverns* (*Sandong* 三洞) in the form of "auxiliary scriptures" (*fujing*). The corpus was divided into seven parts: three "caverns", three collections of auxiliary scriptures, and the *Statutory Texts of the One and Orthodox* [*Ecclesia*] (*Zhengyi fawen*), the text of the Heavenly Master (*Tianshi*) movement of Daoism of the Han dynasty.

The division of the Daoist canon into seven parts still holds today. However, Ming editors of the corpus made significant changes to its content. While the editors kept the titles of the different sections of previous canons, they reorganized the texts entirely, giving prominence to scriptures developed in later periods, such as the Song, and new structures such as divisions between "secular" and "monastic" Daoism, and between Daoist "sects" related to specific mountains, temples and clergy.

With regard to the general nature of the corpus, the ancient canon as well as the Ming edition consist of two mutually exclusive categories of texts: those that are

[371] Schipper and Verellen 2004.
[372] Shangqing and Lingbao Daoism are forms of Daoism that are the result of the amalgamation of Daoist beliefs in north and south China during the Six Dynasties. Shangqing and Lingbao texts are believed to be mystical revelations to adepts.

intended for the initiated only, and others that are meant for everybody else. Many texts were exclusively transmitted to disciples of Daoism; these texts could only be found in the canon, or in the private possession of Daoist masters. Such texts were never part of general libraries, and do not quote from texts in general circulation. Similarly, texts in general circulation usually do not quote from restricted texts.

An understanding of the canon as a description of different levels of initiation transmitted within a framework of ordination can at first seem to point towards a secretive and guarded system of belief. Indeed, scriptures are considered essential to the transmission of the "Dao", and transmission is a matter of initiation. However, it is also important to remember that throughout its history, Daoism is a practice in communication with the outside world that involves, among other things, communities of believers with varied backgrounds and diverse places of worship.

As for the tension between texts and practice, the canon was distributed to Daoist temples and individuals through copies and prints, with non-restricted texts circulating separately and freely, at the same time as local traditions were incorporated as part of the canon.

The history of the canon in the Song and Yuan dynasties illustrates this phenomenon. In the early Song, Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 998-1022) ordered the most powerful official in his court, Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (962-1025), to reconstruct the canon, of which major copies had been destroyed after the fall of the Tang. In 1017 Wang presented a catalogue of the entire canon, which was then assembled, corrected, hand-copied and distributed to temples all over the empire. These temples, in turn, made copies of the imperial set and distributed them further. At the end of the Northern Song dynasty, the Huizong emperor had the Daoist canon printed.[373] Huizong ordered a search for Daoist books throughout the empire to complete his edition of the canon, and founded a Daoist library with a revolving repository to store the scriptures. After the fall of the Northern Song, the printing blocks for the Daoist canon entered the collection of the Jin dynasty, whose emperor printed an even more complete and larger edition of the corpus. This edition was lost at the beginning of the Yuan dynasty. However, in 1244 the Mongol rulers had the canon reprinted again.

Through their fervent collection and distribution practices and through legislation, successive rulers of the Song, Jin and Yuan dynasties claimed authority

[373] The woodblocks for the canon were cut in Fuzhou, where previously the Buddhist canon had also been printed.

over the Daoist canon. The Huizong emperor issued edicts against "those who 'propagate evil doctrines' and 'worship demons' on the basis of scriptures without foundation which are not contained in the canon".[374] Again, in 1281 the Mongol emperor Khubilai was responsible for a dramatic display of authority when he ordered that all texts as well as the printing blocks of the canon be burnt.

At the same time, other trends of this period reveal how the authority of the canon was continuously challenged and the corpus' contents changed. The widespread use of printing contributed to this development, but was not a necessary condition.[375] Piet van der Loon discusses several catalogues of private collections of books from the Northern and Southern Song dynasties which all contain a "Daoist section" of scriptures, biographies, and texts on alchemy and talismans. The Huizong emperor's search for books to complete his canon and the larger editions of the canon in later dynasties indicate that many previously unknown texts must have circulated in collections of individuals, eventually becoming part of the canon.

Another important factor is the influence of local religious organizations. Although the Song, Jin and Yuan canons are now lost and we do not know exactly what new materials were added, it is likely that each new edition would have included works produced by the new Daoist schools founded in that period. Often, these schools developed from religious organizations. Religious organizations had various religious and social aims, from conducting pilgrimages to establishing hospitals. During the periods of division and struggle that characterized much of the Song and the Yuan, these associations grew in power and wealth. Many sought and received imperial patronage for local centers and deities, and distributed their own literature. One example is the Quanzhen movement which was founded in the late twelfth century. This movement grew rapidly and was eventually recognized by both the Jin and Mongol rulers. In fact, adepts of this school edited the 1244 Yuan Daoist canon, and they added new texts relating to their own history to the corpus.

According to Schipper, the incorporation of local traditions and deities into the Daoist canon indicates that this religion became immersed in local society and popular culture. The Daoist clergy and ritual masters, including spirit mediums, worked together, and local deities were assimilated with cosmic energies and

[374] Van der Loon 1984: 45.
[375] Schipper writes that during the Yuan period, some Daoist scriptures "were among the most widely printed and distributed texts in China, surpassing the circulation of Buddhist and Confucian works", see Schipper and Verellen 2004: 638.

canonized. Schipper believes that at this point the other two main religious and philosophical currents in China, Confucianism and Buddhism, distanced themselves from Daoism.

At the beginning of the Song dynasty, Confucian and Buddhist scholars advocated "the unity of the Three Teachings". This conciliatory trend, which proposed that the "Three Teachings" of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism originated from the same source and complemented each other, continued in the Yuan and Ming dynasties.[376] While Schipper admits that "the interpenetration between the three traditions was strong", he contends that

> in practice, only Daoism continued to believe in the dialogue. The other two doctrines tended towards increased differentiation. The unity of the Three Teachings therefore became primarily a Daoist cause and was only actively supported by Confucianism and Buddhism at times when Chinese culture as a whole was threatened, as during the Mongol period.[377]

By the Song dynasty, the three traditions of Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism shared a long history that involved reciprocal influences, in thought and practice. This fact alone should prevent us from drawing a priori boundaries between traditions, or from assuming that each tradition could only have had one type of relationship with the other two.[378] Chapter Three stressed that "Confucian" literati and "Buddhist" clergy could have had a multitude of approaches towards each other: some texts emphasize their differences, while in others they seem to reach out to each other. Many individuals feel an affiliation for both institutions, and in such cases distinctions between "Confucian" and "Buddhist" are difficult to make.

Such diffusion can be found in Daoism, too. In fact, the Song Daoist canon itself provides a good example. It is well known that the Lingbao Daoist tradition, whose texts were an important part of the Song canon, was influenced by Buddhism. Schipper writes that Song Daoist ritual in particular was influenced by Tantric Buddhism, and, most importantly, the Southern Song canon contained texts of so-called Shenxiao rites, including a list of nine Heavenly Worthies, two of whom are famous Bodhisattvas. However, the same Song Daoist canon contained several texts that could be considered slanderous of Buddhism. These texts included the anti-

[376] The unity of the "Three Teachings" soon became an artistic theme as well.
[377] Schipper and Verellen 2004: 635.
[378] For art this means, again, that we should be careful about using such terms as "Daoist art" or "Chan art".

Buddhist *Scripture of the Jade Purity of the Great Dao of the Most High* (*Taishang dadao yuqing jing* 太上大道玉清經) and the well-known *Scripture on the Conversion of the Barbarians* (*Huahu jing*). Both texts had been part of the canon since the Tang and were only removed from it in the Yuan, in spite of Buddhist opposition to their inclusion during the reconstruction of the canon in the Song.

This evidence moderates Schipper's view on the role of Daoism regarding the unity of the Three Teachings. More importantly, it shows that in order to understand how religion was experienced in early modern China, it is rewarding to focus on particular themes in religion and art and follow their development, instead of focusing on the different traditions of the Three Teachings as they are understood in modern scholarship. The reception histories of the theme of the Chan eccentric show that religious experience in Song and Yuan China is a trend of religious currents that do not discriminate between teachings. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, important evidence for this is offered by Chan lists of wandering saints that include Daoist immortals, just as the Song Daoist canon includes two Bodhisattvas in its list of nine Heavenly Worthies, and preserves texts on the eccentric Hanshan.

In modern scholarship, the Daoist canon of the Ming dynasty and, more particularly, its 1607 supplement, are rightfully acknowledged for their attention to popular religion. This canon includes a great number of scriptures related to popular saints. Thus, Schipper writes "the late Ming stands out in the history of Chinese culture as a moment of freedom and creativity". However, this should not lead us away from the freedom and creativity of the Song and the Yuan, where many later cults originated, and saints such as the eccentrics frequently appeared in texts and art.

### *Du Guangting and the immortal Hanshan*

The earliest evidence for the eccentric Hanshan can be found in an excerpt of the *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era* which quotes a compendium of Daoist immortals by Du Guangting. Du's compendium is no longer extant, but the concept of Hanshan as an immortal and his association with such an influential personality of Daoism at the beginning of the Song dynasty are significant, as is his inclusion in a collection of strange tales. This evidence shows that as early as in the tenth century, Hanshan had developed into an important presence in wider beliefs in China.

In a monograph on Du Guangting, Franciscus Verellen studies this Daoist master's life, based on his works.[379] Du's career starts at the court of one of the last emperors of the Tang dynasty, emperor Xizong. At the Tang court in Chang'an, or present-day Xi' an, and in Chengdu, where the court fled rebellions, Du supported this dynasty by interpreting prodigies and foretelling the future. After the fall of the Tang, he occupied the same post of spiritual leader for the kingdom of Shu in present-day Sichuan province. Here, Du produced some of his greatest works. He attempted to restore the Tang Daoist canon and wrote a sacred geography of China including monographs on mountains, as well as annotations to commentaries on Daoist classics, records of miracles and hagiographies. Du had many of these texts printed for the first time. As in the Tang court, he obtained state patronage from the Shu rulers for the Daoist cause; even, the Shu rulers regarded themselves as a Daoist dynasty. Du became a legend immediately after his death. An expert in the liturgy of Lingbao Daoism, his authority on ritual was invoked many times in later periods.

In his article on legends of Hanshan, Wu translates Du's hagiography of Hanshan, as found in the *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era*.[380] The first half of Du's excerpt describes how the Daoist master Xu Lingfu (9th century) collects Hanshan's poems:

> Hanshanzi was the pseudonym of a hermit whose real name is unknown. He lived on Cuiping mountain in Tiantai during the Dali period (766-780). Since this mountain is snow-capped all the year round, he called himself Hanshanzi, or inhabitant of the cold mountain. He liked to compose poetry and wrote his poems on rocks and trees. Those who were fond of strange and new things sometimes followed him, copying thus more than 300 poems, which were edited with a preface in three books by a certain Daoist named Xu Lingfu of Tongbo (9th century). About ten years later Hanshan disappeared.[381]

Xu Lingfu was a student of the same line of Daoism as Du Guangting, and in an introduction to *Poems of Hanshan*, Barrett considers the possibility that Du fabricated the connection between the eccentric Hanshan and Xu in order to claim the monk for

[379] Verellen 1989.
[380] Wu 1957.
[381] Wu 1957: 415.

the Daoist cause.[382] Such a claim would have been necessary to counter a similar claim by the Chan master Linji Yixuan, who allegedly composed responses to Hanshan's poems at about the same time. Xu was a famous author himself, but while one of his works describes the Tiantai mountains, he does not mention Hanshan at all. This curious fact could strengthen the assumption that Du manufactured his version of the legend of Hanshan.

However, as Barrett shows, these arguments are both ambiguous. First, Linji's poems in response to Hanshan are mentioned only in two late tenth-century works. Second, Xu's treatise on the Tiantai mountains is part of a work that discusses connections between mountains and emperors, and does not deal with poetry per se. Thus, his omission of Hanshan in this text is not necessarily significant. Barrett justly argues that Du's hagiography primarily indicates that Hanshan could not be clearly identified with any group: he was neither a Daoist nor a Chan personality. Indeed, the second half of Du Guangting's excerpt in the *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era* shows how easily a "Buddhist" role for Hanshan could be replaced by a "Daoist" role:

> In 871 Li He, a narrow-minded and quick-tempered Daoist of Piling who was fond of offending others, was visited by a poor man who came to beg for food. Of course, Li He did not give him anything but instead scolded him. The beggar went away in silence. About a week later a rich man mounted on a white horse arrived, followed by six or seven servants in white, but he was hospitably received by Li. The horseman asked him whether he recognized him. Li, astonished to learn that he was the poor beggar of several days before, was too ashamed to apologize, as he should have done in the face of his offence. The stranger reproached him: 'You do not know the proper way to cultivate the Dao. This is why you are always offending others. Have you heard of Hanshanzi? It is I. I thought you could be influenced by teaching, but now I am sure that you are hopeless' And he rode away with his followers, never again to return.[383]

Thus, at about the same time that the Chan genealogical record *Transmission of the Flame Record of the Jingde Era* defines Hanshan and his companions Shide and Fenggan as Bodhisattvas, Du Guangting's Hanshan speaks about cultivating the Dao.

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[382] Barrett in Hobson 2003.
[383] Wu 1957: 415-416.

I concur with Barrett's idea of Hanshan as a "mountain man" rather than a Daoist or Chan personality. However, his conclusions do not seem to follow the trail set out by this assumption. Barrett focuses on Hanshan as a poet, on the nature of his poems, and on Hanshan's "conversion" to Chan. He argues that this eccentric's popularity rises only from the thirteenth and fourteenth century onwards, where we find the earliest painted images of Hanshan, and the first collection of "Hanshan-style" poems. Further, he finds that eremitism, the result of the Mongol invasions of China, was responsible for the popularity of Hanshan in art and poetry, in Confucian circles and for Chan monks. Also, Barrett believes that "tracing the success of Hanshan's visual image would take us rather far afield: paired with Shide he became so well known as to be treated as a minor god of riches in popular religion".[384]

If we assume Hanshan to be neither a Chan nor a Daoist personality, it would, in fact, be essential to "trace the success of his visual image", *especially* if that would take us "far afield": this success contributes to our understanding of Hanshan as an individual beyond Chan or Daoist claims. Also, as has been shown in Chapter Three, while the earliest extant paintings of Hanshan are from the thirteenth century, literary references for the existence of such paintings date back to the eleventh century, in the form of encomia attached to Chan abbots' discourse records. This indicates a much earlier interest in Hanshan and other eccentrics in texts and art, and not exclusively because of a "sense of eremitism", or limited to Chan circles. The discussion of paintings, sculptures and rubbings in the previous and present chapters indicates that many of these artistic projects involved individuals from all kinds of backgrounds. Thus, with regard to Daoist attention to this eccentric, I believe that Du Guangting's excerpt is one of several texts from the Song dynasty that reflect a genuine interest in Hanshan, not just in opposition to a possible Chan claim, but in order to better understand the nature of this popular deity.

*The Cloudy Bookcase with Seven Labels and the alchemist Hanshan*

In the preface to the *Cloudy Bookcase with Seven Labels*, its compiler Zhang Junfang 張君房 (fl. 1008-1025) identifies himself as one of the editors of the Song Daoist canon, and claims that this work is a compendium from that collection. Today, the

[384] Barrett in Hobson 2003: 132 and 144n75. This role of Hanshan has been investigated by Eberhardt. Eberhardt gives no further sources.

*Cloudy Bookcase* is a major Daoist anthology and an important source for otherwise lost works. The *Cloudy Bookcase* became part of the Yuan and Ming dynasty Daoist canons, and was praised by the authors of the largest bibliographic compilation in China, the Qing *Complete Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書), for its clarity and completeness.

The *Cloudy Bookcase*'s main focus, almost half of the entire anthology, is on "tending life techniques", including alchemy, and the eccentric Hanshan is credited as the author of one such text, the *Mental Mirror of Cyclical Transformation* (*Dahuan xinjing* 大還心鏡). This text is evidence of yet another perception of Hanshan: as an expert on medicine as well as a spiritual guide.

The Song court made Zhang Junfang, author of a few collections of strange tales, assistant draftsman to Wang Qinruo, in charge of the reconstruction of the Song Daoist canon. Zhang writes that the Zhenzong emperor had books sent to Hangzhou where Zhang classified them, consulting collections of Daoist temples in the area. Schipper and van der Loon acknowledge that Zhang was involved in the reconstruction of the Daoist canon by the Song court, although the exact nature of his involvement is uncertain: van der Loon believes that Zhang did no more than supervise the preparation of the manuscripts.[385] However, both authors agree that the *Cloudy Bookcase* was never a representative anthology of the Song canon. While its title corresponds to titles given to copies of the imperial canon that were further distributed by Daoist temples, the sevenfold division of this canon, referred to by the "seven labels" in the title, does not apply to Zhang's handbook. Moreover, the *Cloudy Bookcase* contains no texts on liturgy: apart from a few talismans, charts and diagrams, it has no petitions, memorials or ritual documents. Such texts would definitely have been part of the Song canon. Thus, Schipper believes, Zhang or another person using his name may have borrowed the title "Cloudy Bookcase" to produce an anthology with their own selection of texts. This selection could reflect Zhang's views on how the imperial canon should have been arranged, or it could have served another purpose: the preface indicates that Zhang presented his handbook to the emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1022-1063), and he might have taken this emperor's interests into account. Whatever the case may be, as Barrett notes, the *Cloudy Bookcase* responded to a growing interest in "tending life techniques" in Song society.

[385] Schipper and Verellen 2004 and Van Der Loon 1984.

The anthology may originally have been presented to the emperor, but it was also widely read in literati circles.

Hanshan's treatise in this collection deals with contents of elixirs as well as a more spiritual form of alchemy: it states that the aim of alchemy should be to "obtain the perfect medicine and at the same time achieve illumination".[386] The text quotes the work of Tao Zhi 陶埴 (d. 825) and Ma Ziran 馬自然 (d. 856). This raises questions on the authorship of the *Mental Mirror of Cyclical Transformation*: as has been shown in Chapter One, Hanshan is usually dated to no later than the eighth century. Thus, it is impossible to ascertain the name of the real author of this text. However, this only underscores the significance of Hanshan's continued association with the treatise: to readers in Song, Yuan and Ming China it was perfectly acceptable to think of this legendary, wandering saint and immortal as a spiritual teacher as well.

### *The Records of the Multitude of Immortals of the Three Caverns and "Cold Cliff"*

In 1154 the name Hanshan appears again in a Daoist text. Like Du Guangting's compendium discussed above, the *Records of the Multitude of Immortals of the Three Caverns* is a collection of hagiographies of Daoist immortals. This text, compiled by the Daoist master Chen Baoguang, survives in its entirety, and can therefore be explored in more detail with regard to issues of arrangement and purpose of the text.

The biographies in the *Records* are quotes from Daoist works dating from the Han to the Song dynasties. The quotes are arranged in pairs and headed by a couplet of two four-character titles. In a summary of the text, Verellen describes how these titles introduce antithetical or matching pairs of a wide variety of entities including plants, animals and natural phenomena.[387] He writes that this arrangement and the systematic identification of sources could suggest that "this work could be used as a dictionary of quotations and for facilitating the memorization of sources for reference". Still, the preface indicates that the *Records* primarily served a religious purpose: it transmitted "traces" left by immortals "to convince unbelievers of the possibility of transcendence".

For the hagiography of Hanshan in *The Records of the Multitude of Immortals of the Three Caverns*, Chen Baoguang uses Du Guangting's version of the Hanshan

[386] Schipper and Verellen 2004: 410 and Ren 1991: 700-701.
[387] Verellen in Schipper and Verellen 2004: 886.

legend. However, Chen uses the name Cold Cliff (*Hanyanzi*) instead of Cold Mountain (*Hanshan or Hanshanzi*). This change of names has led to some speculation. In particular Barrett contends that Chen Baoguang may have believed, or may have wanted his readers to believe, that Hanyan and Hanshan were two different hermits. A "Daoist Hanyan" would then be evidence for Chen's attempt to distance himself from "Hanshan", popular in Buddhist circles of the time. While it is possible to interpret the name Hanyan as a move to reinforce a Daoist claim on Hanshan, there are several reasons to assume that Chen would have had no particular intentions for his change. By the time he compiled the *Records*, the name Hanshan as a Daoist personality had already been confirmed by Du's excerpt and the *Cloudy Bookcase*, and Chen uses Du's version of the story. In fact, Du's excerpt in the *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era* contains the term "cold cliff": it says that the Cuiping mountain in Tiantai was deep and dense, that it was snow-capped in summer and therefore known as "cold cliff".[388] Further, the preface to the *Records* includes an allusion to Chan. Lin Jinzhong, author of the preface, argues that immortality can be attained through study, and he elaborates on the philosophical problem of innate endowment versus moral cultivation. Here, he refers to the Chan debate of sudden versus gradual enlightenment. This not only reflects Chen's awareness with regard to current debates in other traditions, it also shows how easily the questions and interests of one tradition could be applied to the issues of another tradition. In the *Records* too, then, Hanshan seems to be primarily part of a current that focuses on saints and immortals, rather than the emblem of a particular tradition.

### *Hanshan, Shide and paintings of Daoist immortals*

Texts of the Song and the Yuan that deal with the strange in general and the Chan wandering saints in particular and the Daoist canon of this period both reveal a genuine interest for the unknown, beyond religious traditions. This interest is not only textual, but finds concomitant expression in art. Examples in painting and stonework and references in art-historical literature testify to the popularity of individual deities, and, more importantly, to a belief in a wide otherworld where deities that belong to one tradition can easily be shown in the context of another tradition, even copying

[388] *Extensive Records of theTaiping Era* Vol. 55: 338. Wu omits this sentence in his translation of the excerpt in Wu 1957: 415.

elements of iconography and style. Below I will discuss examples of this trend, with attention to illustrations of Hanshan and Shide and of Daoist immortals.

The Kyoto National Museum holds a set of two scrolls showing two Daoist immortals (Fig. 15). The scrolls are in colour, and are dated to the Ming dynasty. The Daoist immortals hold a lotus and a scroll respectively, and are painted against a background of shifting clouds. They are accompanied by two figures who can be identified as Hanshan and Shide: Hanshan is holding a scroll, and Shide a broom and a lotus. The eccentrics are wearing the same loose-fitting robes as the immortals, but the expression on their faces is exaggerated: while the immortals smile benignly, the eccentrics grin and reveal their teeth. Smaller in size and almost trailing behind the immortals, they appear to attend to the Daoist deities.

The Kyoto scrolls measure almost two meters in length. Compared to smaller portraits in black ink, these hanging scrolls in colour are positively overwhelming. Also, they would have required a large, spacious environment for proper viewing, such as the main hall of a temple. Important for this section, the scrolls are evidence for an artistic trend involving a combination of deities: "Daoist" immortals and "Chan" eccentrics.

Other surviving Ming paintings corroborate this evidence. A set of four hanging scrolls by the artist Liu Jun presently in the Tokyo National Museum, consists of portraits of the Daoist deities Xiama and Tieguai, as well as the eccentrics Hanshan and Shide. This set gives equal prominence to the four saints, as each scroll is the portrait of one individual only. To my knowledge, there are no surviving paintings of the eccentrics shown together with other deities from the Song and the Yuan dynasties. However, literary records of the work of Song and Yuan artists as well as their extant paintings strongly suggest the existence of a trend of illustrating saints, eccentrics and immortals from all kinds of backgrounds, separately as well as together, prior to the Ming.

Literary records and surviving paintings of the Yuan artist Yan Hui can serve to explore the nature of this belief. Kondō Hidemi 近藤秀实 discusses the life and work of this artist in *On Yan Hui: A World of Drifting Spirits* (*Lun Yan Hui: hunpo youli de shijie* 论颜辉：魂魄游离的世界).[389] Based on an extensive study of Chinese and Japanese sources, including colophons attached to paintings, Kondō argues that

[389] Kondō 1996.

Yan Hui was born in Luling, in present-day Jiangxi province, and that he studied painting with a certain Yu Sheng, who painted walls of temples in that area. Yan Hui is also primarily known in China and Japan as a painter of walls of Buddhist and Daoist temples and palaces. Still, Kondō writes, we should remember that Yan Hui's work included a variety of themes on different media. For instance, he discusses a scroll entitled *Barbarians hunting* (*Huren chu lie tu*), mentioned in a colophon by the literatus Hu Yan (1361-1443). According to Kondō, it is because of such paintings that Yan Hui was appreciated by literati viewers.

Of course, literati could appreciate painters of murals, too, provided there was some historical distance. Su Shi thought well of the famous Tang mural painter Wu Daozi, while Yan Hui himself is mentioned in several Song and Yuan texts on painting that appreciate his work as a specialist of themes for temples. More important for this discussion is Kondō's analysis of Yan Hui's contribution to painting. He believes that Yan Hui excelled in describing a "dark, gloomy and restless" otherworld. Yan does this best in his paintings of the Daoist deities Xiama and Tieguai (Fig. 20). These immortals are shown on two hanging scrolls, seated on rocks against a mysterious background of clouds and bamboo. The atmosphere is indeed sombre, and the deities look out at the sky or to a point beyond the viewer.

Interestingly, Kondō does not believe that a pair of large, coloured hanging scrolls of Hanshan and Shide, discussed in Chapter Two, are by Yan Hui. He finds that compared to Xiama and Tieguai, the eccentrics' postures are too rigid. As has been discussed in Chapter Three, Toda Teisuke also notices a difference between these two sets of scrolls. However, he argues that Yan Hui varied his style according to subject matter. The present state of the Hanshan and Shide set is incomplete: both paintings were clearly cut at the sides before they were placed in their current mounts. This makes it difficult to properly compare the two sets. Still, Kondō and Toda are right to notice a difference in the treatment of the individuals depicted. Xiama and Tieguai's limbs and robes appear softer, features that are enhanced by the grim background. Reasons for this may indeed be a difference of subject matter or a development of Yan Hui's artistic style. What is more important is that Kondō shows why the *Hanshan and Shide* could easily be attributed to Yan Hui: these scrolls are permeated with the same awareness of an obscure, unknown world. He finds the eccentrics' grins strange and almost frightening, and writes how the artist of this set, like Yan Hui in his art, seems to have paid exclusive attention to the two monks.

Next, Kondō asks whether such images were appreciated by viewers of the time. He describes many paintings as visually "ugly" and attempts to answer this question by arguing that religion requires art to facilitate teaching and that many such "ugly" figures functioned to complement texts that described them as such. Whether or not images can be defined as "ugly" is open to debate. Also, we can ask questions about the exact nature of the "religious influence" in Yan Hui's art. Therefore, Kondō's most important argument is in fact that Yan Hui succeeded in turning the "ugly" into the "strange", and that viewers of his time "awoke to the theme of the strange made from the ugly".

Indeed, more than illustrating any explicitly religious topics, Yan Hui's paintings describe the unknown, beyond the limitations of religious traditions. This is not only apparent from *Xiama and Tieguai* and *Hanshan and Shide*, but also from his paintings of such topics as monkeys, which Kondō justly describes as an "independent", rather than a "religious" subject. Colophons added to Yan Hui's paintings, including colophons for the paintings of monkeys, describe the "strangeness" and "restlessness" of his art, obviously ideas that led to a sense of wonder and admiration from his viewers. One particularly long colophon added to a mural is in fact a poem that discusses, apart from Yan Hui and his teacher Yu Sheng, various philosophical issues and monks, such as Hanshan and Shide. The content of the actual mural is unclear; what *is* clear is that it was made and viewed within a wider context of an interest in religion, philosophy and, most importantly, strange things beyond the limitations of religion and philosophy.

Yan Hui is hardly the only painter whose work testifies to a widespread interest in things unknown in the Song and the Yuan. Painters of Chan eccentrics discussed in Chapter Three were all interested in all kinds of topics. For instance, Muqi painted monkeys, cranes, Arhats and Guanyins, and Liang Kai worked on historical as well as non-historical persons. Shi Ke painted deities of the "Water Palace" and Guanxiu painted Arhats he "saw in his dreams". Sometimes, these painters are categorized in traditional paintings texts as "painters of Daoist and Buddhist subjects", but it does not seem likely that, at least on the level of otherworldly spirits, there was a strict division between types of religious subjects: the texts do not explain "Daoist and Buddhist subjects" any further, and the artists, in fact, seem to diffuse themes in their work. This is confirmed by the similarities in Yan Hui's sets of Daoist immortals and eccentric monks discussed above, as priority is

given to creating an atmosphere of mystery and restlessness, rather than the "Daoist" or "Buddhist" nature of the deities.[390]

A handscroll depicting the demon queller Zhong Kui also attributed to Yan Hui serves to illustrate this point. Patron deity of scholars and exorcist of evil spirits, Zhong Kui is shown as the central figure in a procession that includes demons of various appearances carrying objects such as jars and clubs, pushing wheelbarrows and bearing poles. Sherman Lee writes that Yan Hui's scroll is one of many paintings of this theme, which can be associated with festivities on New Year's eve.[391] The fearsome Zhong Kui was thought to be particularly active during this time of the year and people hung up his pictures and actors dressed as Zhong Kui in plays. A handscroll of this deity recording this custom was popular with patrons at court, who were intent on reconstituting cultural and political status through collections of texts and art objects.

In addition to painted examples, Lee has also found a representation of this theme in relief, on the base of the Liuhe Pagoda in Hangzhou. This pagoda was built in 970 and the Zhong Kui relief can be dated to 1163, predating the Yan Hui painting by at least a century. Just as in the case of artistic representations of the eccentrics, discussed in previous chapters and in the present chapter, here we find an image of Zhong Kui represented in different media and contexts. This deity traverses religious and social boundaries, appearing on pictures to be hung up on walls, on handscrolls collected by the court and in stone, on the base of a Buddhist pagoda.

In style and iconography too, Lee detects interesting crossovers. The representational method of this relief is clearly compatible to Yan Hui's painting, in fact, it may even have been based on a similar scroll. With regard to iconography, Zhong Kui on Yan Hui's scroll is making a gesture of greeting or command that Lee finds to be similar to Buddhist gestures of "do not fear". Also, the scroll shows Zhong Kui carried by three demons, a strong reminder of compositions in Buddhist painting where Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are carried by similar beings. Thus, Zhong Kui, in a fashion similar to that of the eccentrics, becomes part of a common otherworld, translated into different media and adopted in different contexts.

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[390] Song and Yuan artists' diffusion of various categories of eccentrics and immortals effects modern analysis, too. For instance, three hanging scrolls showing three Arhats attributed to Guanxiu were long held to be illustrations of Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan ---see Fontein and Hickman 1970: 5-8.
[391] Lee 1962 and 1993.

In traditional art-historical literature, several Song and Yuan dynasty texts complement this artistic movement through a focus on paintings of the strange. As noted in Chapter Two and above, the Song *Catalogue of Paintings in the Xuanhe Collection* recognizes a category of "Buddhist and Daoist subjects". Many well-known texts, such as Zhuang Su's *Supplement to "Painting" Continued* mentioned in Chapter Two, describe artists such as Yan Hui as a painter of "landscapes, figural art and spirits" (*shanshui, renwu, guishen*). In this text, twelve painters are categorized as painters of spirits and ghosts.

Song and Yuan catalogues of collections of paintings of religious institutions and individuals are another important source for understanding the impact of spirit painting. It may not be unusual to find detailed descriptions of such paintings in catalogues of collections of Buddhist temples, but it is fascinating to read similarly elaborate discussions in collections of individuals. One example is the description of a painting of spirits in the collection of the famous Northern Song literatus and bamboo painter Wen Tong 文同 (1018-1079).[392] Wen describes this painting in detail, including its effect on himself as the viewer: the spirits' appearance makes the hair on his head and body stand up. Although many of these texts on painting are now unfortunately lost, their existence in the Song and the Yuan underscores the importance, in texts and images, of a belief in spirits, and a position for the eccentrics as part of that spirit world.

[392] Xie 1998: 123.

# Chapter Five
# Chan, Art and Practice:
# Viewing and Collecting Images of Wandering Saints

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Is Buddhist art an aesthetic category or a category of animated, religious icons? Charles Lachman writes that "Buddhist art" is a "designation for a category whose borders are ever shifting and whose contents are constantly being renegotiated."[393] He describes two groups among scholars of Buddhist art. J. Leroy Davidson, he argues, belongs to the first group that values a search for "some imagined aesthetic purity": Davidson's research on the Lotus Sūtra in Chinese art focuses on paintings and sculptures only, ignoring a considerable body of illuminated manuscript examples which he does not consider to be "art".[394] Donald McCallum and Bernard Faure belong to the second group, which emphasizes the ritual context and functions that govern the production of images, rather than aesthetic properties and motivations. McCallum wants to look at "all icons outside of the context of art as an aesthetic category", while Faure believes that "modern and Western values of aestheticization, desacralization and secularization" repress the concept of the animated Buddhist icon.

Lachman also writes that within the category of Buddhist art, "Chan art" "poses something of an interpretive challenge in that it is typically construed less as a subcategory of Buddhist art than almost as a kind of anti-Buddhist art." Various modern scholars consider "Chan art" or "Chan paintings" ---Lachman acknowledges that painting is virtually the only artistic medium ever associated with Chan--- to look and act very differently from other Buddhist artworks. These paintings are held to differ in style and subject matter, they are viewed in the light of an "iconoclastic spirit", and said to embody "Chan content".

Based on an analysis of Muqi's best-known painting *Six Persimmons* (*Shitu* 柿圖), Lachman shows that this belief is largely a modern construction. "Chan painting" and Buddhist art, he writes, "should be understood as coextensive to a considerable

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393 Lachman 2005: 52.
394 Leroy Davidson 1954.

degree". As for Buddhist art, to consider it as either a "search for spiritual truth" or an "explication of aesthetic purity" is problematic, since, as Lachman argues, this assumes that the sacred and the aesthetic are transhistorical absolutes. He concludes that the notion of Buddhist art is perfectly functional, as long as it is understood as a convenience.

My approach to images of Chan wandering saints, paintings, sculptures, steles and textual references to the monks, agrees with Lachman's views of what Buddhist art, or, for that matter, religious art should mean. Preceding chapters have considered representations of the eccentrics with regard to their aesthetic properties as well as exploring their connections to Chan religious experience, paying specific attention to situations where borders between artistic media such as paintings and steles and religious beliefs such as Buddhism and Daoism are fuzzy, and investigating the implications this has for how we understand this art. However, unlike Lachman, I maintain that it is not feasible to uphold a category of "Chan art".

Lachman's deconstruction of the "Chan" aspects of *Six Persimmons* does not question the existence of "Chan painting". Instead, he uses it only to prove that "Chan painting" was "more earthly than spiritual": he believes that this art may not have had any religious intentions at all and that it served instead to engage literati preferences and tastes. Such an exclusive definition for "Chan painting" contradicts Lachman's assumption that the content of Buddhist art is necessarily under constant renegotiation---surely, "Chan painting" cannot be an exception. Further, while Lachman admits that "the bulk of images produced by and for the Chan school cannot be differentiated from 'Buddhist painting' generally" he does not provide a definition for "Chan art" other than the issues of style, subject matter, spirit and content noted above. Yet these are the same issues that Lachman objects against when he describes his views on "Chan painting". It is also unclear whether he believes other artistic media to embody "basic Chan elements" ---are there "Chan steles" and "Chan sculptures"?--- since he restricts himself to painting, too. Thus, again, we are left in doubt as to what exactly "Chan art" means.

In Chapter Three, I argued that it was more rewarding to explore the nature of the relationship between Chan and art than to attempt to answer what "Chan art" might mean. I showed how the encomia inscribed by Chan abbots on paintings of eccentrics reveal a distinct approach towards these illustrations. Written in a form that prevents a single, dominant understanding of the portrait image, the encomia question

the interpretation of art objects as visual signs. Further, read as part of the Chan canon and independent of the paintings that they complement, these inscriptions are themselves objects of veneration and contemplation.

In this chapter, I consider the relationship between Chan and art based on how objects were used in monasteries. In the first section, I compare Chan interest in the wandering saints, represented by the systematic production of a particular type of paintings and encomia, to the worship in Chan monasteries of a figure known as the "Holy Monk", codified in Chan monastic codes. The personalities of the wandering saints and the Holy Monk are very similar: they are all unruly figures with a divine status. Chapters Three and Four have shown that the saints are subjects of numerous devotional inscriptions, including encomia by Chan abbots and stele inscriptions by groups of lay devotees. In the Chan codes, the Holy Monk is central to a variety of ceremonies that include ritual performances such as circumambulation and prostration. The Holy Monk is one of the few personalities discussed in Chan monastic codes and the only personality for which rituals of worship are discussed so elaborately, underscoring this character's importance for Chan religious experience in the Song and Yuan. With regard to the Holy Monk's artistic representations, there are strong indications that the performances described in the codes may not have taken place in front of an image, such as a painting, a sculpture or a stele. Instead, the Holy Monk may have been worshiped in the form of emptiness framed by a seat. In spite of evidence that the cult of the Holy Monk was central to Chan religion and art, this fascinating figure has been neglected in Chan studies. Discourse to date is persistently dominated by only a vague sense of what "Chan" and art in a Chan context are supposed to mean: "Chan" is seen as a sentiment, a spirit of iconoclasm and an intuitive perception of reality rather than an actual religion in practice. Studies of "Chan art" are focused on finding this spirit in painting through issues of style and subject matter, as has been noted above. Focusing instead on practices of viewing and veneration, this chapter aims to present a comprehensive view of the experience of religion and art in Chan.

Art in Song and Yuan Chan establishments encompassed a variety of objects and associated practices of viewing, collection and veneration. In the following, I will consider different types of images of eccentrics, such as hanging scrolls, handscrolls and steles and compare practices of viewing, collecting and performing in front of these images to similar practices for other objects that are also part of the Chan

establishment, such as portraits of historical abbots and ox-herding pictures. This comparison is based on modern discussion of these artistic themes as well as an important traditional record that also considers art objects in monasteries: monastic gazetteers. Monastic gazetteers provide information on the layout and collections of monasteries. Further, of import to this chapter, they record names and inscriptions of visitors. These visitors, including emperors and many officials, also had a private interest in particular types of art. Some collected paintings of eccentrics. Documentary evidence for these collections in China is scarce, but a few recorded examples reveal that in such private collections the paintings were again subjected to particular practices of viewing: collectors would invite Chan abbots to their homes to discuss the interpretation of particular images. Evidence for the collection of images of wandering saints in Japan is much more common. The final section of this chapter reports on some of the larger Japanese collections of these images and their implications for Chan and art.

## 2. THE HOLY MONK AND THE CHARISMA OF OTHERNESS IN CHAN MONASTIC CODES

### THE *RULES OF PURITY FOR THE CHAN MONASTERY (CHANYUAN QINGGUI)* AND THE HOLY MONK PINDOLA

The *Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery* (*Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規) is the earliest surviving Buddhist monastic code in China. Written in 1103 by the monk Changlu Zongze 長蘆宗賾 (?-1107?), the *Rules* was also the first definitive code for the Chan establishment and an inspiration for many more codes written between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.

As noted in Chapter One, monastic codes are prescriptive guides to aspects of monastic life and a range of activities in Song and Yuan temples. They offer the correct procedures for monks and nuns for daily activities such as eating and bathing, for interaction with senior staff and for proper deportment during ceremonies.

One of the first lines of the *Rules* is the following bold statement:

A monk would rather die with the law than live without it.[395]

This proclamation underscores the importance of the Buddhist law, or the precepts that need to be observed in order to attain enlightenment. The *Rules* divides the precepts into the "Three Bodhisattva Precepts" of avoiding evil, doing good and benefiting all sentient beings, meant for both clergy and laity, and the "Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Precepts", which are lists of major and minor offenses for monks and nuns, and punishments. Offenses include such actions as stealing or eating meat, while punishments range from confession to expulsion from the order. The code urges monks to study and memorize the rules, and to uphold the precepts rigorously "as though one were protecting a precious gem".

For most modern readers, the *Rules* is a source for understanding an ideal condition of monastic life in Song and Yuan China. I consider the text as a source for studying issues of art and religion in the Song Chan establishment. In particular, I focus on the figure of the "Holy Monk" (*shengseng* 聖僧), repeatedly mentioned in the code. The Holy Monk is central to a variety of ceremonies, including those held at the arrival of new monks and during mealtimes, but neither the *Rules* nor any other Song or Yuan Chan code explains who this monk is. Traditional and modern scholars offer several possibilities for his identity, including that of the monk Pindola (*Bintoulu* 賓頭盧). The main source for this identification is the work of the eminent writer and founder of the Precepts school of Buddhism Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667). Based on still earlier sources, Daoxuan describes how Pindola asked the monk Dao'an 道安 (312-385) for offerings of food after the Buddha condemned him to dwell on earth because he had committed an offense. The identification of the Holy Monk as Pindola leads to the curious situation of a monk who committed an offense as a central image of worship in Song and Yuan Chan monastic codes. The codes' insistence on maintaining the precepts would appear to clash with their reverence for this maverick figure. The Chan worship of Pindola has implications for our understanding of the religious value of anarchic personalities, including the wandering saints, and for the significance of the lawless in Buddhist law.

[395] ZZK 2-16-5: 439a14-b7.

In his preface to the *Rules*, Changlu Zongze confirms that this code is part of a long tradition of sets of rules for monastics in China. In *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*, Yifa discusses this tradition in detail.[396] She argues that while modern scholars are often focused on doctrine rather than ceremony, the codes show that throughout, regulations and practice were important, too.

The earliest Chinese monastic codes can be dated to the third century and consist of partial translations of Indian codes, including basic rules for daily living and instructions for ceremonial procedures. Notably, according to the tenth-century *Abridged History of the Sangha Compiled under the Song* (*Dasong sengshi lüe* 大宋僧史略), the source for Chinese procedural practices was a text from the Dharmaguptaka school. Following the appearance of the first complete translations of Indian codes in the fifth century, the codes of this school, known as the *Four Part Vinaya* (*Sifenlü* 四分律), dominated all others. Thus, the main reason for the popularity of the *Four Part Vinaya* seems to be its connection with contemporaneous practice. When the *Four Part Vinaya* was first translated in the fifth century, its regulations corresponded to customs already in practice in the earliest Buddhist communities.

Most regulations in the *Rules* can be found in the writings of the Precepts master Daoxuan. Author of the *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*, and an authority on the *Four Part Vinaya*, Daoxuan produced numerous commentaries on this text to explain regulations and describe the customs of his order in detail. Yifa writes that these commentaries contain practices that would become standard monastic procedure, such as the "ritual of the novice receiving the precepts" (*shami shoujie wen* 沙彌受戒文), and the "five contemplations" (*wuguan* 五觀) that are recited before meals in Chan monasteries up to the present day. Several objects found in Chan monasteries are also first mentioned in Daoxuan's writings. For instance, the "hammer and stand", a signal instrument, and the way to use it, are first described by this eminent author.

Daoxuan was greatly inspired by his predecessor Dao'an, who created a set of guidelines for Buddhist communal living well before the first complete Indian codes

[396] Yifa 2002.

were translated. Dao'an's biography in the *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks* and Daoxuan's commentaries indicate that Dao'an was strongly concerned with ritual too. Customs codified by Dao'an include offering incense, circumambulation and chanting These are still some of the most important rituals in Buddhist monasteries today.

According to Changlu Zongze, monastic codes such as the *Rules* are necessary to protect monasteries, propagate the Buddhist faith and gain respect in the eyes of others. Simultanously he complains that there are different codes in circulation at the same time, due to the continuous introduction of new regulations and the spread of monasteries to different regions. He believes that "in principle different sets of rules should not exist", although he recognizes that changing times and situations may require this.

The social constituency observing rules for prescribed behaviour was extensive. The *Rules* and other codes were in constant communication with society beyond the Buddhist establishment. Yifa notes that according to the *Rules*, several regulations were established in the time of the Buddha through the initiative of lay devotees. The laity were frustrated that monks did not arrive in unison to receive their meals and did not wait until all had received their food; as a result, the Buddha ordered that a regular mealtime should be arranged and that one person should announce that food will be served. In China, as early as in the fifth century, members of the nobility involved themselves with clerical regulations. Prince Wenxuan 文宣 of the Qi dynasty (r. 459-494) and Emperor Jianwen 簡文帝 (r. 549-551) of the Liang dynasty both wrote regulations for the laity and clergy. The Song government regulated Buddhism in China through measures such as annual registrations, tonsure certificates and travel permits, all of which required monks and nuns to obtain official permission for a position in a monastery. The state also had the right to grant honorific titles. Monks were selected as officials to oversee the Buddhist community and reported to the prefectural government. In addition to measures related to official procedure, Yifa shows how religious practice was subjected to outside influences too. Popular secular festivals, such as the lunar New Year and the winter solstice, were celebrated in monasteries and legendary Chinese emperors were worshiped before and after summer retreats.

Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, the Buddhist establishment created several new sets of regulations, in part to suit changing environments. These codes may have been smaller in scale, such as the 1317 *Rules of Purity for the Mirage Hermitage* (*Huanzhu an qinggui* 幻住庵清規), written for the private monastery of Zhongfeng Mingben, or they may have been commissioned by an emperor, such as the 1338 *Reconstructed Rules of Purity of Baizhang* (*Chixiu Baizhang qinggui* 敕修百丈清規), commissioned by the Yuan emperor Shundi 順帝 (r. 1333-1368) to serve as a single text for the entire Buddhist community. Particularly the production of the *Reconstructed Rules of Purity of Baizhang* indicates that by this time the authorities recognized the heterogeneity of monastic codes as a problem: Yifa provides a list of codes written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, each with its own characteristics. Notably, attention to ritual features prominently in each of the codes. The 1209 *Daily Life in the Assembly* (*Ruzhong riyong* 入眾日用) focuses on issues of meditation and the correct procedures for performing ordinary daily tasks, while the 1274 *Jiaoding qinggui* 校訂清規 uses diagrams to illustrate monks' positions during rituals and the 1311 *Alternate Rules of Purity* (*Beiyong qinggui* 備用清規) expands on the ritual of chanting. Additionally, the Precepts and Tiantai schools also produced texts for their orders. However, Yifa writes that all codes used the *Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery* as a model, and that the Precepts and Tiantai codes shared many rituals with Chan codes.

*The Holy Monk Pindola*

The Precepts master Daoxuan, whose commentaries to the *Four Part Vinaya* are the source for the *Rules* and other monastic codes, writes that the guidelines of his great predecessor Dao'an were based on his study of the Indian codes. According to the *Biography of Eminent Monks*, Dao'an was acquainted with foreign monks who brought these texts to China, and he studied the regulations devotedly. However, two major rituals codified by Dao'an, Daoxuan and in the *Rules* have their origins in incidents from Dao'an's life. These are the rituals of inviting the Holy Monk to bathe and offering him food.

According to the *Biography of Eminent Monks*, one day a strange monk arrives in Dao'an's temple. At night, this monk moves in and out of halls through

cracks in windows. He also reassures Dao'an, who is worried about his enlightenment, that he will attain liberation, but only if he invites the "Holy Monk" to bathe. The strange monk shows him how this is done, as well as giving him a vision of his future in the Tusita heaven of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Another time, a foreign monk appears in Dao'an's dream. Again, the monk reassures him that his annotations to the sūtras are correct. In addition, he tells Dao'an that the Buddha forbade him to enter nirvāna and that he will help Dao'an propagate the faith if Dao'an offers him food at shrines within the temple. Dao'an's disciple Huiyuan 慧遠 (334-416) identifies the monk in his master's dream as Pindola.

At the time of the appearance of the *Biography of Eminent Monks*, the legend of Pindola had developed into something of a cult. In the fifth century, the monk Huijian translated the *Method of Inviting Pindola* (*Qing Bintoulu fa* 請賓頭盧法), a hagiography of Pindola and a detailed description of the correct procedures for offering him a bath and food. Also, after being cured from an illness after offering food to Pindola, emperor Wu 武帝 of the Liang dynasty (502-557) gave official support to this custom. Later, in the seventh century, the monk Daoshi 道世 (dates unknown) wrote a long descriptive article on Pindola. Of course, Pindola is also well known as one of the most important arhats in China, but this is a late phenomenon. In early literature he is considered as a saint in his own right, rather than part of a group.

John Strong discusses several legends that describe Pindola's colourful and unruly nature.[397] The first story tells us that Pindola had a bad reputation for gluttony. In fact, he only converted to Buddhism because he noticed that the Buddhist clergy received a lot of food. He used large begging bowls and threatened donors if they did not comply to his demands. The Buddha cured him of this habit by magically causing his bowl to become smaller each time he went out to beg, forcing Pindola into moderation. Another legend notes that Pindola was eager to display his supernatural powers. He exhibited his talents not only in open competitions, but also for personal gain. For instance, he flew up into the air and threatened to throw a large boulder onto a donor's house when she refused to offer him cakes. Sometimes he used this power unawares: on one occasion he went on a visit without realizing that he was dragging along the mountain that he had been sitting on earlier. According to the *Method of Inviting Pindola*, these transgressions were reported to the Buddha who banished

[397] Strong 1979.

Pindola from his following and condemned him to dwell in different realms and "become a field of merit for the faithful". Pindola's purpose would be to help those who offered him food to accumulate merit.

Banishment is a severe punishment. In fact, in the codes it is one of the worst sanctions that a monk or a nun may have to endure. However, each of Pindola's actions can also be interpreted in a completely different way. The story of Pindola's reputed gluttony recognizes that there are monks who join the order for personal gain, but it also says that Pindola was cured of this disease. Thus, it could serve to quell any doubts that the laity might have on the sincerity of monks. Moreover, in a sequel to the legend in which Pindola threatens a donor for cakes, he takes her to the Buddha and she becomes enlightened, indicating that his behaviour was for the greater good. Similarly, when Pindola joins magic competitions it is to defeat heretics, even though magic is not a path that practitioners are encouraged to follow. In his exhibition of magic, Pindola's ambivalent position becomes clear: his powers, in a sense, reveal him to be above any law, yet he will remain a monk for ever. Strong argues that Pindola is in fact the *ideal* monk who is condemned for all time to wander and do good, quelling doubts in people's minds. According to Daoshi's description of Pindola's cult, he was allowed to return to this world from time to time to take a seat in the monastic assembly, and to this purpose an empty seat would be left for him. Pindola would come unknowingly and it would be impossible to determine whether he had accepted invitations by monks to bathe and eat or not. Daoshi describes how monks check for footprints in the dining hall and traces of water splashed about to ensure that Pindola had been present and that they had carried out the rites properly.

If Pindola is the ideal monk, he is also the ideal candidate for the position of the Holy Monk in Song and Yuan Chan codes. As noted above, the Chan and Precepts codes share the same sources, namely the writings of Daoxuan and Dao'an. There is no reason to assume that the cult of Pindola as the Holy Monk, in practice at least since Dao'an, would have suddenly changed in Song Chan monasteries. While there are two other candidates for the position of the Holy Monk, evidence for them is comparatively scattered. Briefly, the two candidates are the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and the arhat Kaundinya. Based on a petition by the eighth-century Tantric master Amoghavajra (*Bukong* 不空) to install an image of Mañjuśrī above all images of Pindola in monastic refectories, some scholars assume that the worship of Pindola was

replaced by that of the Bodhisattva as early as the Tang. While the petition was implemented in some monasteries, there are strong indications that this was not always the case. The Japanese pilgrim Ennin 圓仁 (794-864), for instance, was surprised to find an image of Mañjuśrī in the dining hall at the famous site of Wutaishan, indicating that this was not common practice. The name of the arhat Kaundinya as the Holy Monk first appears in the biography of Amoghavajra's teacher Vajrabodhi (*Jinkangzhi* 金剛智) in connection with the petition of his disciple: the biography confuses Pindola with Kaundinya. Also, the Yuan-dynasty code *Reconstructed Rules of Purity of Baizhang* allocates the most senior seat in its seating arrangement for the summer retreat to Kaundinya. From this the Japanese Zen master Mujaku Dōchū inferred that the Holy Monk must be Kaundinya. While Kaundinya may be the Holy Monk in the *Reconstructed Rules of Purity of Baizhang*, this cannot be used as evidence for the identity of the Holy Monk in all codes.

A third possibility would of course be a Chan personality as the Holy Monk, but there is no evidence for this in any of the codes. However, it is noteworthy that many modern Chan temples use a sculpture of Budai to represent the Holy Monk. While this cannot count as evidence for similar practices in the Song and Yuan, I propose that it indicates that the position of the Holy Monk was and is reserved for a particular personality: the anarchic, itinerant saint. Of course, beyond the codes, in the Chan canon, Pindola is only one of many peculiar personalities worshiped in Chan. I return to these issues in the section on the Law and the lawless, below.

### *Objects and practice in the* Rules *and the image of the Holy Monk*

Focused on the correct procedures for life in a monastery, the *Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery* contains detailed descriptions of the uses of a variety of objects, including clothing, utensils and instruments, and architectural spaces such as bathrooms and kitchens. These descriptions reveal that objects, spaces, and the actions performed using objects and spaces are not only essential for maintaining orderliness in a monastery, but that they interact with its inhabitants and contribute to their religious development. Notably there is no distinction between practices in front of images of deities and those related to objects for daily use: the *Rules* acknowledges

the capacity of all objects and all kinds of actions to contribute to the religious understanding of monks and nuns.

A case in point is that the *Rules* attaches importance to signal instruments such as the bell, drum, fish-shaped board and the octagonal stand and hammer. These instruments are mentioned throughout the text, as well as in a dedicated section that describes types of signals to the assembly. At the beginning of this section, we read that

> Whenever the bell, drum or fish-shaped board is struck, the monks must know what they are expected to do. At the fifth *geng* [four a.m.] the big bell is tolled as a signal for the monks to wake up and rise from bed. The ringing of the small bell in front of the kitchen signifies the 'opening of small quietness'. The cloud-shaped metal sheet is struck for the 'opening of big quietness'. Striking the long board tells the monks to take down their bowls and striking the wooden fish is the signal for the gathered assembly to be seated quietly.[398]

The section continues to describe various signals that are given as the day progresses until the evening when "the sound of the big bell at sunset means the servers must go to the shrine for chanting". The *Rules* also describes how each instrument should be struck. For instance:

> When striking the long board or the wooden fish, a light hand should be used to initiate the sound. The strikes then gradually grow louder and stronger and the sound should be smooth. The tempo then speeds and slows intermittently, while the strikes become lighter, then heavier respectively.[399]

The code emphasizes precision and recommends that a striker who strikes too softly or too loudly, or too quickly or too slowly be "taught that it is best to maintain a sense of harmony and smoothness". Most importantly, it notes:

> From morning until evening the bell and drum work together. Not only are they reminders for the assembly, but they themselves continually preach the Law. So you, honourable people in the monastery, each of you should know the proper times for each activity.[400]

Here, the bell and drum are signal instruments as well as preachers of the Buddhist law, and the code treats them with due respect.

[398] Yifa 2002: 198.
[399] Yifa 2002: 199-200.
[400] Yifa 2002: 199.

The treatment of incense burners is another good example. In addition to being one of the most important objects in Buddhist ritual, the code considers the burner itself to be capable of propagating the faith through the fragrance it emits. This also occurs in modern practice; it was apparent during a ceremony in the main hall of the Foguangshan Chan temple in 2004 which I was privileged to attend. On this occasion, chanting started with a prayer dedicated solely to the incense burner. While no such prayer is recorded in the *Rules*, this text recognizes the value of this object in various ways. Obviously, incense is important during all kinds of ceremonies, and the code writes that the “incense attendant” is responsible for arranging the burners. On a more subtle level, the importance of the incense burner is evident when the code describes the movement of donors during a “grand feast”. Instead of writing that the donors kneel in front of an image, the code tells us that the donors kneel in front of an incense holder ---an object that is placed in front of an image ---directing attention towards this item.

The above objects are all used in religious ritual, but it is important to remember that the code pays similar attention to the arrangement and handling of such objects as bowls and chopsticks and harvest records ---all part of the monastic organization. While these objects are not appreciated in the way that the signal instruments, the incense burners and the sūtras in the library are, their value for Chan religion becomes clear through the code’s emphasis on the time, precision and care needed to use them properly.

As noted above, the *Rules* does not consider particular objects or actions to have greater benefits for religious development than others. Therefore it is no surprise that the code should focus so strongly on such activities as packing a knapsack or eating. However, it is remarkable that when it comes to religious imagery, the *Rules* reveals an exclusive focus on representations of only one figure: the Holy Monk.

Representations of the Holy Monk are mentioned in each of the seven fascicles of the text, and the code gives elaborate descriptions of actions that are performed in front of it. Intriguingly, we do not know in what form the Holy Monk was worshiped. It is uncertain whether this was a statue, a stele, a painting or simply an empty seat. It is clear that this was a spatial entity: monks stand facing it, to the rear of it, and they bow and prostrate themselves in front of it.

The *Rules* records only three other religious images. Apart from a statue of the Buddha, these are a “holy statue” and a picture of the abbot. While we find the name

of the Buddha throughout the code, as part of speeches, recitations and chants, an image of the Buddha is mentioned only once, in the context of a ritual on "each day of the month ending in a three or an eight". On these days, the abbot leads the congregation through the various halls of a monastery burning incense, and performs three prostrations "in front of the Buddha statue".

The code makes note of a "holy statue" when it describes the organization of a "grand feast sponsored by a donor". The monks use incense, flowers and curtains to decorate the monastery, and when all participants are seated, music is played and the donor kneels before the "holy statue". It is unclear to which deity the "holy statue" refers. Most probably this was again an image of the Buddha. Simultaneously, it is important to remember that a number of deities could have been worshiped during a grand feast. Recently, on such an occasion at the Tiantongsi, the famous Chan temple near Ningbo, donors offered incense to the Buddha and all the monks in the main hall of the temple in a fashion similar to that described in the *Rules*. Additionally, they offered incense to images of all the other deities in that hall, including arhats. The *Rules of Purity* may only have recorded the most important actions in front of the main image.

At the end of its last fascicle, the *Rules* prescribes the funeral of an abbot. After the body of the abbot is placed in a shrine, a painting of the abbot will be suspended above his seat. The assembly and guests bow to this painting, offerings are placed in front of it, and the rector will read out a eulogy. After the abbot's cremation, the congregation bows to the painting again, and it will be moved to the hall of pictures. In section three of this chapter, I will return to this ritual in detail. For the moment, it is important to note that the picture of the abbot is only mentioned once, and at the end of the code. In contrast, the Holy Monk appears in the first fascicle where he confronts new arrivals as soon as they enter the monastery:

> The new arrivals enter the Sangha Hall through the south side of the front door and go before the Holy Monk. They stand in their positions fully unfolding their sitting mats, and bow down three times. They then pick up their sitting mats and, starting from the place of the chief seat in the Sangha Hall, they circumambulate the hall once, returning to the Holy Monk, before whom they bow down.[401]

[401] Yifa 2002: 118.

Before meals, the monks, following the abbot, pay homage to the Holy Monk:

> The abbot enters the hall, bows to the Holy Monk, and then bows with the assembly simultaneously. The abbot then assumes his position, but before he sits down he bows once again. Thereafter the assembly may ascend the platforms. Then the rector enters the hall, bows before the Holy Monk, burns incense, and stands beside the octagonal stand with a hammer. At this point the monks display their bowls.[402]

The performances in front of the Holy Monk are repeated endlessly in the next fascicles for such activities as chanting, for the appointment of chief officers, for the return of the fundraiser from visiting donors, to announce the beginnings of the summer retreat and for the funeral of a monk. The Holy Monk even has his own attendant and receives donations. According to the *Rules*:

> The Holy Monk's attendant is required to set out the offerings of food, tea, incense lamp and candles to the Holy Monk. He should work with the server to the rectory in sweeping the Sangha Hall, dusting the sūtra closets and desks, and arranging the liturgical vessels. After offering money to the Holy Monk, during mealtime, the Holy Monk's attendant collects the donations for the Holy Monk and puts them into the collection pail. The Holy Monk receives clothing and monetary gifts as donations. With the exception of robes and money, which the attendant collects with the rector and tallies in the records, all donations are entrusted solely to the Holy Monk's attendant. These include handkerchiefs, needles, thread, tea, medicine, and money given specifically for the reading of the sūtra or for small donations given for the sake of the common bond among all living things.[403]

Thus, while we know very little about how the Holy Monk was represented, based on the *Rules* it is safe to say that this personality was a major presence in the Song Chan establishment and central to life in Chan temples of the time.

### THE LAW AND THE LAWLESS: THE HOLY MONK, WANDERING SAINTS AND THE CENTRALITY OF THE OTHER IN CHAN PRACTICE

The Holy Monk, most likely the unruly saint Pindola, holds a unique place in the *Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery*. Part of every major ceremony recorded in the code and an essential element of daily life in the Chan monastery, the Holy Monk is consistently worshiped throughout the text, and each time the code provides us with

[402] Yifa 2002: 124.
[403] Yifa 2002: 170.

elaborate descriptions of ritual performances that are acted out in front of him. Chan's deep reverence for this anarchic figure does not come as a surprise. Elsewhere in the Chan canon, there is evidence for an equally strong interest in personalities similar to that of the Holy Monk. Particularly the wandering saints compare well to the Holy Monk, with regard to their character traits as well as their reception history in the Song establishment.

Like the Holy Monk, the saints were itinerant sages who were extraordinary to the degree that they transgressed all kinds of laws and performed supernatural acts. Most importantly, the wandering saints were subject to consistent worship in texts and images in a fashion comparable to the worship of the Holy Monk. The regular production of paintings of these monks inscribed with encomia that reveal a distinct approach towards this art, discussed in Chapter Three, is one aspect of this worship. Inclusion of these encomia in the Chan canon and the depiction of the monks on steles and in sculptures is another.

In art, the visual representations and concomitant visualities of the Holy Monk and the wandering saints are varied: while we do not know what representations of the Holy Monk looked like or whether this was an image at all, images of the wandering saints were produced in large numbers and different media. I would argue that the existence of these different types of images testifies to the central role of this type of personality in Chan, and to its charisma. The establishment developed, viewed and worshiped a variety of visual forms which all describe the theme of the lawless "other".

While historical Chan patriarchs did not usually transgress laws or perform supernatural acts, Song Chan literature reveals that most of these masters were held to be enigmatic personalities, too. In Chapter One, I discussed the four most important categories of Song Chan texts: flame records, discourse records, test cases and monastic codes. The first three types of texts are filled with stories of the lives and words of figures no less eccentric in speech and behaviour than Pindola and the wandering saints. These include such Tang dynasty monks as Mazu Daoyi who let out a shout that left his student Baizhang Huaihai deaf for three days, or Puhua, who, asked to draw his master's portrait, did a somersault and left. Similarly in the Song dynasty, masters such as Yangqi Fanghui would strike lecterns and shout at listeners during convocations. These tales are well known and have often been discussed in modern scholarship.

Still, I submit that the fact that the Holy Monk is emphatically part of the Chan codes and, therefore, of everyday Chan practice invites discussion of Chan's attention to the unusual from a different angle. I submit that the worship of the Holy Monk shows that unconventional figures were central to the "Chan myth", and to the functioning of the Chan establishment.

In an article on saintly fools, Michel Strickmann argues that "the legend of the fool who is in fact a hero in disguise is part of a worldwide storycomplex".[404] Indeed, the fool in disguise, or the lawless and charismatic "other", represented most prominently in Chan by the Holy Monk and the wandering saints, is a phenomenon common to various cultures. Strickmann focuses on the story of Huan Kai 桓闓, disciple of the Daoist authority Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536), which tells us how this lowly student becomes enlightened long before his great master. Comparing the tale of Huan Kai to stories in other traditions, he uses the example of the fool in early medieval Greek monasticism who acts like an idiot so that no one will recognize their virtue. This fool

> purposefully adopts folly as a cloak and so, rather than being revered, he draws scorn. Also, he gives himself over into performing indecent acts, because he lacks all sense of 'decency': meaning that he is entirely dead to the world. Finally, although he is quintessentially a hermit, an anchorite, he has come to live among men so as to convert them; thus, he comes as an apostle, with a mission.[405]

In Catholicism, Strickmann continues, the story of the fool culminates when it is acted out each year during carnival, "a feast of fools, when not only is the conventional fool made king, but all are, in a sense, shown up as fools, all are out of order, unhinged, unstrung".

Arguably otherness is a source of power in any belief, but "the other" may be more central to Chan than to any other religious system. The work of Bernard Faure, discussed in Chapter One, focuses on "the other" in Chan.[406] Based on the absence of any allusions to magic in early Chan texts, he argues that Chan did not revere magic and therefore domesticated its otherworldly, occult elements and transformed them into this-worldly tricksters. Eventually, he continues, the Bodhisattva ideal took precedence over both wonder-worker and trickster, and the most popular saints were

[404] Strickmann 1994.
[405] Strickmann 1994: 48.
[406] Faure 1991.

readily perceived as Bodhisattvas. Interestingly, Faure reluctantly admits that a number of saints were never fully domesticated. For instance, he acknowledges that Hanshan and Shide have an “eerie, otherworldly aspect to them” and he contends that these saints remain both marginal and liminal: marginal to the Chan tradition, and liminal in the sense that they are both uncanny thaumaturges and tricksters of popular mythology. Of course, Chapter Four of this study also shows that in spite of their widespread popularity, the wandering saints were never as central to traditional literati discourse as they were to Chan and Daoist religion and practice. This arguably indicates that the monks were never entirely this-worldly.

Generally, Faure believes that the Chan veneration of the wonder-worker-turned-trickster is indicative of the growing institutionalization of the Chan establishment. A highly visible phenomenon at the end of the Tang, the trickster figure would “serve as an alibi” within the Chan establishment and be “reflective of a loss of the experience that it symbolized”. Meir Shahar, also cited in Chapter One, concurs with this when he writes that the veneration of itinerant and mad monks is the result of resentment toward the establishment. He compares traditional miracle workers to shamans and believes that the establishment acknowledged them only tacitly.

Faure and Shahar do not elaborate on the Holy Monk. Yet, the above investigation shows that the worship of the Holy Monk is an example of a much earlier Chan incorporation of the unconventional, and a different kind of incorporation, too. The Chan establishment adopted with no trouble the Pindola cult of the fifth century from the codes of Daoxuan as an elementary part of its monastic system. Moreover, while Pindola may be venerated as a powerful deity, he will always remain, not a Bodhisattva, but a monk, and one who was punished for transgressing the law at that. Further, instead of considering the domestication of a single type of “otherworldly” character and its transformation from thaumaturge to trickster and Bodhisattva, I would argue that the group of wandering saints consists of a variety of personalities that retain their unique characteristics in the Song Chan establishment. All may simultaneously be venerated as thaumaturges, tricksters and Bodhisattvas, since, while Faure presents the saints as having gradually progressed from otherworldly figures to this-worldly figures and Bodhisattvas, the evidence for this does not hold entirely, as has been noted above. Still, Hanshan and Shide remain eternal recluses, while Budai is a worldly figure who engages in drinking wine and

eating meat ---worldly enough to occupy the position of Holy Monk in modern Chan practice. Arguably, every saint holds a mirror to his worshipers by showing them that there are different ways to attain enlightenment. Thus perhaps more than anything else, the worship of these different personalities in Chan is simply a celebration of different paths to enlightenment ---a celebration that the establishment actively supported through its texts, images and the worship of Pindola and the wandering saints.

Faure is right to point out that the hagiographies of the wandering saints are all relegated to the last chapters of Chan flame records and that this may indicate that biographers were uncertain as to the actual position of these monks in the Chan lineage. However, I see no reason to doubt that Pindola or the wandering saints were an unambiguous part of the structure of the Chan establishment ---and the "Chan myth" discussed in Chapter One. Coined by Theodore Griffith Foulk, the notion of the "Chan myth" refers to the belief of Chan adherents in a tradition of enlightenment and a separate transmission. The above investigation shows that the worship of a variety of anarchic personalities was an unmistakable part of that belief, and that rather than "tacitly approve" of it, the Chan establishment supported this belief in art and practice.

## 3. ART AND PRACTICE IN THE CHAN ESTABLISHMENT

### MONASTIC GAZETTEERS AND ART AND PRACTICE IN THE JINGCI TEMPLE

For the modern traveler to Hangzhou it is impossible to miss the Lingyin Chan temple. Listed as one of the top ten scenes of this tourist city, itself the top tourist city of China, this temple in the Lingyin mountains on the West Lake attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The temple is part of a complex that includes the Feilaifeng grottoes, a park, restaurants, food and souvenir stalls and a shopping mall selling more souvenirs, as well as everything from toys to pajamas. There is a parking area in front of the temple complex where tourists arrive by busloads, and the temple caters to them by offering guides and commentaries in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, English and French. Most commentaries are in the form of written texts, but some of the famous objects have loudspeakers installed next to them that offer non-stop audio guides.

The Lingyin temple has been famous since the Song dynasty. The Northern and Southern Song governments gave land, money and gifts to this institution, and

Song emperors renamed the temple on several occasions. During the reign of the Ningzong emperor 寧宗 (r. 1194-1224), Lingyin became one of the five great public temples known as the "Five Mountains". The abbots of the "Five Mountains", which also included the Jingshan, Tiantong, Jingci and Ayuwang temples, were appointed by the government and had political connections and influence. In the Ming and Qing dynasties and in the twentieth century, the Lingyin temple was destroyed several times. It was rebuilt, often with the help of emperors and the nobility.

In his discussion of the Lingyin temple as a center of monastic practice, Foulk elaborates on the functions of the main buildings of this temple and compares them to those of other types of temples in the Song dynasty.[407] Following this argument, I would emphasize that Lingyin and the other great Chan temples always were public centers, too. The temples were open spaces that attracted visitors from various backgrounds and with different purposes: people spent time here in leisure as much as in devotion, and they would simply come to look at images as much as they would venerate them. Also, each temple has a history that involves particular people and objects. Visitors engaged with these people and objects through donations, comments on images, poetry and notes.

Based on a traditional record, the monastic gazetteer, this section explores how the laity and monks responded to the visual in Chan temples, including architectural structures, objects and environments such as a temple's mountainous location. Monastic gazetteers show how the visual in Chan temples affected wider circles of viewers. Each of the Five Mountains provides plenty of examples of these processes, which continue into modern-day practice. For instance, the monastic gazetteer of the Jingshan temple in the Jingshan mountains contains extensive travelogues of famous visitors who enjoyed the temple's environments. Personalities such as poet-officials Su Che and Ouyang Xiu commented on the Jingshan landscape, and on the taste of tea made from Jingshan leaves. According to the gazetteer, the Jingshan temple developed a tradition of drinking tea and Japanese monks who visited the temple took this tradition back to Japan. Thus, the gazetteer tells us that a tradition developed in China and Japan centered around the Jingshan temple, and it shows us how influential persons contributed to this. In addition, recently, this information has been posted on a wall next to the main hall of the Jingci temple. The texts and photos on this wall

[407] Foulk 1993.

introduce some of the important Chan temples in the Hangzhou area. The photo of Jingshan on this wall and the accompanying text can be seen as the next step in the visuality of Jingshan tea, the Jingshan temple and a Jingshan tradition, which is now subjected to even wider circles of viewers and their interpretations.

The most important object at the Ayuwang temple is a relic of the Buddha. This temple was supposedly founded as early as 282, and a pagoda was built for the relic in 405. Because of this relic, Song emperors honoured the temple with poems, and the relic remains the temple's major attraction today. One of the Tiantong temple's main attractions is a stele in Chinese and Japanese commemorating the visit of the Japanese monk Dōgen. Founder of the Sōto school of Buddhism in Japan, Dōgen visited Tiantong to study with its famous abbot Changweng Rujing 長翁如淨 (1163-1228). The stele was donated by the Japanese Buddhist Society in 1980, and the temple's buildings and its cultural relics have also been renovated using Japanese funds. Here, the presence of Dōgen, represented visually by the commemorative stele, inspires interactions between Chinese and Japanese temples, as much as it interacts with viewers at the temple every day.

At the Lingyin temple, a recent event can serve to illustrate the impact the visual has on viewers. As noted above, the Lingyin temple was nearly destroyed on several occasions in the Ming and Qing dynasties, in most cases by fire. In the twentieth century, during the Cultural Revolution, the temple was attacked by a mob. In the chaos, while some were trying to destroy the temple and others were trying to protect it, Lingyin monks replaced images of the Buddha and other deities with images of Mao Zedong.[408] The monks believed that changing visual imagery in the temple would change the response of the mob and save the site. Eventually the temple was saved.

For this study, the most significant of the five great Chan temples is the Jingci temple. This temple shares many characteristics with the other four mountains. Its location on Huiri peak, bordering on the West Lake, is inspiring. Jingci was home to several influential abbots including Yongming Yanshou, author of the *Records of the Source Mirror* and discussed in Chapter One, and Dōgen's teacher Changweng Rujing, whose remains are kept there. The temple holds the Nanping Bell, a famous object with a resonance extolled already in Tang poems. But most importantly, Jingci

[408] Duan 1997.

is famous for Daoji, the Song Chan eccentric monk who inhabited this temple for many years. Today, an image of Daoji can be found right behind the image of the Buddha in the temple's main hall, and visitors are invited to look at a well inside the temple compound that relates to an event from Daoji's life. No references to images of the wandering saints in the Jingci gazetteer exist. However, it is worthwhile to consider some of the ways in which Daoji appears in this text, as this holds clues to ways in which the saints may appear in gazetteers of other temples.[409]

*The monastic gazetteer of the Jingci temple and the eccentric Daoji*

The latest edition of the monastic gazetteer of the Jingci temple is a 2006 publication.[410] The two volumes of this text were compiled in the Ming dynasty, and reprinted three times in the Qing dynasty. From the general introduction and the two Qing introductions it is unclear how the original Ming edition was constructed. There is no reference to Yuan or Song gazetteers, although the text quotes from sources from the Tang to the Qing. Nonetheless, as one of the Qing editors notes, the tradition of writing monastic gazetteers goes back to at least the Northern Wei dynasty, and the *Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang* (*Luoyang qielanji* 洛陽伽藍記). This text, written by Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之 (sixth century), is an account of Buddhist life in Luoyang, with detailed descriptions of temples and their wealth. We may assume that gazetteers were produced regularly in the Song and the Yuan, and that the organization of information in surviving Ming and Qing examples is essentially similar to that of earlier texts.

The 2006 edition is divided into two volumes (*ce* 冊) with a total of 28 chapters (*juan* 卷). The first volume covers the temple's buildings, the value of its real estate and landed property, its abbots and their writings and the temple's pagodas and scenic spots. The major part of the second volume is dedicated to quotes from ancient records, literature and poetry on the temple and its environment, its inhabitants, architecture and art. The information provided varies. For instance, for some buildings the gazetteer only says that the building is no longer extant, while for others, such as the Hall of the Heavenly Kings, it provides histories of the building's construction,

409 Hanshan and Shide are mentioned in the gazetteer for the Guoqingsi and the Hanshansi, which are presently unavailable.
410 Shi Jixiang reprinted by Zhao 2006.

and details of the objects kept inside. For the Arhat Hall, it gives the names of the 500 Arhats represented inside.

Notably, the gazetteer contains ten illustrations. Eight are views of the Jingci temple from different angles, while the remaining two are of Yongming Yanshou and Daoji (Figs. 31-32). These two illustrations testify to the importance of the two monks for the Jingci temple.

The illustration of Yongming Yanshou in the Jingci gazetteer is a small half-portrait of the monk. According to the editor, this portrait was originally carved on the back of a mirror at the request of a certain Huang Shan 黃山. Huang Shan's inscription indicates that the mirror was meant for the temple's "Yongming Room" (*Yongmingshi* 永明室). The editor continues that the mirror is now lost, but Huang Shan's son kept a rubbing of the half-portrait, and since the Yongming Room is an ancient part of the temple, the editor published this image. The original Yongming Room is no longer extant. The gazetteer tells us that this room used to be to the left of the "Source Mirror Hall" (*Zongjingtang* 宗鏡堂) and that it served as a reading room for Yongming Yanshou, but that it was destroyed in the Jiaqing period.

Yongming Yanshou was one of the first abbots of the Jingci temple. In fact, the temple was built for this illustrious monk in 954 by a Five Dynasties' king as the "Hall at Huiri for Yongming" (*Huiri Yongmingyuan* 慧日永明院). Earlier, Yongming had presided at Lingyin, and when he took up his post at Jingci in 961, he had no less than 1700 students, including 36 Korean monks.

It does not come as a surprise to find Yongming's name mentioned throughout the gazetteer. Of course, some of his writings are quoted in the section on abbots' writings, but he also turns up in quotations from such texts as *Introduction to Appreciations of Portraits of Yongming Yanshou* (*Yongming Yanshou chanshi xiang zan bingxu* 永明延壽禪師像贊并序) by "the monk Huihong" (*Shi Huihong* 釋惠洪), most probably the famous abbot, historian and poet Juefan Huihong, and in quotes from notes and stele inscriptions by the laity. Another, interesting way in which Yongming appears visually in the Jingci temple is as part of the Source Mirror Hall. According to the Ming edition of the gazetteer, this hall was built in 954 as a lecture hall, and Yongming's *Records of the Source Mirror* was kept in it. In the Ming, the abbot moved Yongming's relics and a portrait of the monk to a pagoda he had built for him behind the hall. The hall returns in a number of quotes added to this

information. First in a memoir by Huihong, who recalls his travels to Jingci, impressions of the hall and the importance of Yongming Yanshou; this is followed by a note and a poem by the official and connoisseur Li Rihua. Li collected paintings, and he commented on a scroll of portraits of wandering saints, a point to which I will return below. Thus, Yongming's continuous presence is not only attested by collections of his writings and quotes, but also through the visuality of the structures named after him and the comments and notes of visitors on these structures in the Jingci gazetteer.

The illustration of Daoji in the Jingci gazetteer is a copy of a portrait of the monk on a stele. This stele is embedded in the eastern wall of a pavilion built over the "Well of Transporting Wood" (*Yunmujing* 運木井) in the temple, and accompanied by an inscription. The present editor of the gazetteer writes that although there are two seal impressions carved onto the stele, it is not clear who the author of the inscription is. He connects the stele to a Yuan source, and believes that it "has long been part of the temple". Indeed, Daoji's portrait reminds the viewer of the numerous Song and Yuan paintings and steles of the wandering saints: the monk is shown in a fashion similar to Hanshan, Shide and Budai, with loose, even torn robes, and an expressive face with an open mouth. Daoji appears to be moving, and holds a fan. The inscription notes that he is "neither a lay person nor a monk, neither a mortal nor an immortal", and it describes his facial features and character.

Daoji, also known as Jidian 濟顛 or Jigong 濟公, was ordained at the Lingyin temple. However, he shocked his fellow monks by behaving like a madman, drinking wine and eating meat. He was subsequently thrown out of Lingyin, and decided to live at Jingci instead. Since Daoji was never abbot at Jingci, his quotes are not part of the gazetteer's section on abbots' writings. The text does note a number of Daoji's contributions to the temple, all of which involve miracles. For instance, Daoji demanded that sixteen Arhat images be brought from the Song palace to the Jingci temple, after he had seen this incident in a dream. Coincidentally, the Song empress had the same dream, and she arranged for the images to be moved. Daoji's most important feat at Jingci is his miraculous transportation of wooden logs for the reconstruction of the temple when it was destroyed by fire. This story, also recorded in the gazetteer, tells us how Daoji simply ordered the logs up in the mountains to float down the river and surface in the well inside the temple walls. After the

reconstruction was completed, one log remained inside the "Well of Moving Wood", where, according to the temple authorities, it can still be seen today.

In a fashion similar to that of Yongming Yanshou, Daoji's story is recorded in the gazetteer as text, and as an architectural structure that is emphatically part of the temple complex. The monk features in another interesting context in the gazetteer, as a commentator of paintings. There are at least two comments by Daoji on portraits of himself, which are listed next to comments, notes and poetry by such figures as the famed Song poets Su Shi and Huang Tingjian, the Ming painter Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559) and, again, Li Rihua, in the literature section of the gazetteer. Daoji's comments resemble the inscriptions of Chan abbots on their portraits, collected in abbots' discourse records and discussed in Chapter Three. For instance, he says of one portrait:

> My face is yellow like a candle
> My bones are as thin as firewood
> Best to give this resemblance away as alms.[411]

Again, Daoji comments on another portrait:

> From a distance it isn't me
> Up close, it doesn't resemble me
> This likeness was painted
> Using a lot of time and skill.[412]

Interestingly, this comment was written on a portrait requested by a certain Shen Tidian 沈提點. In an extensive study of Daoji, Meir Shahar remarks that the only contemporary reference for Daoji is a eulogy on this monk's reliquary by the abbot Beijian Jujian.[413] Moreover, Shahar believes that this eulogy was originally written for another monk. Also, he points out that Daoji's biography was never part of the Chan biographical records. This leads Shahar to conclude that while Daoji and other Chan eccentrics may have been venerated by the laity, "clerics were reserved". However, Daoji's comment on the portrait for Shen in the Jingci gazetteer strongly suggests the existence of another contemporary reference: most likely, the gazetteer's Ming editor collected the reference from earlier, Song and Yuan gazetteers. Further, gazetteers

[411] Shi Jixiang reprinted by Zhao 2006: 411.
[412] Shi Jixiang reprinted by Zhao 2006: 411.
[413] Shahar 1998.

were written by clerics as a record of a monastery's importance, and for a readership that included clerics. The repeated mentioning of Daoji in this text in various forms, as miracle-worker and commentator, does not seem indicative of a reserved attitude towards this eccentric monk. Instead, it is evidence for the powerful connection between Daoji and Jingci, where Daoji was miracle worker, commentator and the person behind the "Well of Moving Wood", one of the temple's main attractions.

The importance of the gazetteer as a source for studying issues of art and practice cannot be overestimated, and this holds for issues of the art and practice of images of wandering saints, too. As noted earlier, I have not yet come across references to the saints in the Jingci gazetteer. However, there are references to Hanshan, Shide and Fenggan in the gazetteers of their temple of origin, the Guoqing temple. As with Daoji, these references include quotes of the monks' sayings and writings, and descriptions of buildings and objects connected to them. For example, the Guoqing temple compound includes a Hanshan and Shide pavilion, and a Fenggan bridge.[414] These architectural constructions are visual testimony to the connection of the saints to the temples and their continuous presence at the sites.

Today a sculpture of Budai can be found in the entrance hall of most if not all temples, including Chan temples. A tradition since the Song dynasty, these Budai images are still subjects of poems and notes. For instance, in the 20th century, abbot Mingyang 明暘 (1916-?) of the Tiantong temple wrote a poem for the Budai image in this temple's entrance hall.[415] Again, a set of scrolls of calligraphy entitled "Hanshan Questions Shide" was part of an exhibition at the Lingyin temple in 2003. Notably, according to the inscription, the scrolls were done by a certain Xue Song "at the Guoqing temple". Mingyang's poem and Xue Song's scrolls are modern examples of how different kinds of visual representations of the eccentrics, part of Chan temple complexes, affect viewers, and of a tradition of responding to the visual in Chan temples.

[414] Duan 1997: 269.
[415] Duan 1997: 242.

## Portraits of historical abbots, ox-herding pictures and the wandering saints: themes and their uses in Chan

In the preceding chapters, I argued that the wandering saints should be considered as a theme in art and religion in China. The importance of this theme is most explicit in Chan, where the saints are consistently venerated in texts and art. Also, the anarchic and unconventional is central to Chan monastic practice in the worship of the Holy Monk, and, as in the case of Daoji at Jingci, the eccentric monk interacts visually with the public at Chan temples.

Below, I compare the various forms in which the unconventional is venerated in Chan to the uses of portraits of historical abbots and ox-herding pictures, two artistic themes that are also important for the Chan establishment. Similar to wandering saints, Chan abbots were worshiped in different media, from mummies to sculptures and portraits. The worship of Chan abbots in different media indicates the growing importance of the abbot for the Chan establishment, just as the veneration of the eccentric in various forms points towards the centrality of this concept in Chan. In this context, Gérard Colas' comment on the relevance of images is interesting. In his work on Indian temples, Colas argues that a distinction can be made "between the main fixed image in a temple and movable, 'functional' images". While the main image, as a symbol of the unchanging aspect of the deity, is the "object of a minimum of cult practice", smaller images, "representing its various manifestations, receive most of everyday worship".[416] As we shall see below, the worship of the Chan abbot likely developed from the worship of a "main image", usually a relic, to the veneration of widely distributed portraits, complete with abbots' inscriptions. Similarly, while the eccentrics were never the "main image" in a any temple, their various appearances in texts and art would have made them the object of regular viewing, and worship.

Chan monks' tradition of painting ox-herding pictures became particularly popular in the Southern Song dynasty. Like wandering saints, concepts of the ox and ox-herding had a tradition in different groups in society of the time. Modern scholarship believes that in Chan, ox-herding pictures were specifically made for educational purposes. While this may be true for one type of representations of the ox

[416] Colas in Faure 1996.

in Chan, other images are evidence for different ways of viewing and understanding this theme.

*Mummies and portraits of historical patriarchs*

The earliest record of a possible mummification of a Chan patriarch is part of the biography of the fourth patriarch Daoxin 道信 (580-651) in the *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*. Daoxin's body was entombed on Mount Huangmei, and, according to the biography, "three years after his death, Daoxin's disciple Hongren and others went to the stūpa, opened it, and saw him sitting upright as in the past."[417] The miraculous preservation of Daoxin's physical body is the first of numerous similar stories for other Chan masters, written down in biographies and epitaphs. In these early texts, Chan masters mummify naturally, as a sign of their spiritual attainment. This prevents their bodies from decaying and enables them to continue to exist. A good example is the case of the well-known Chan master Xuefeng Yicun 雪峰義存 (822-908). When this monk died "his corpse was placed in a casket, from which it was lifted each month to have the nails and hair trimmed. The body had not decomposed even after one hundred years." Later texts note the use of lacquer for mummification, but only to "assist natural mummification".

Mummification was not an exclusively Chan tradition. As early as in the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE- 24 CE), mummification was practiced in China in order to prevent the body from decomposing, and the soul from passing away. However, this practice became especially popular in Chan, through the regular veneration of relics, and the discourse on relics in Chan texts. In an article on Caoxi, the location of the sixth patriarch Huineng's tomb, Bernard Faure shows how this place became a pilgrimage site and a cultic center for practitioners of Chan, and how it surpassed the popularity of the famous site of Mount Wutai.[418] In Chan texts, he mentions several dialogues from the *Transmission Record of the Jingde Era* on the topic of relics. Faure writes that practitioners of Chan disagreed on the value of venerating relics and some believed that preaching emptiness, true Chan masters were not supposed to leave relics at all. However, we can also consider these dialogues in the way that we consider encomia on paintings of wandering saints. Through their

[417] Sharf

[418] Faure 1992.

very existence, and by questioning the veneration of relics, the dialogues point out their importance to Chan practice. Of note here seems to be the role of the Chan master as successor to the lineage of enlightenment. Worshiped in life, patriarchs' preserved bodies would confirm their continued presence after death.

Early Chinese Buddhist mummies such as those of Daoxin and Huineng were typically placed in tombs in remote mountain areas. Often, a portrait of the deceased monk was also interred. These portraits, known as "spirit seats" (*lingzuo* 靈座), functioned as a way to remember the deceased, a resting-place for the deceased, and an object of worship. One example is the tomb of the Northern Wei (386-534) monk Huishi 惠始. According to the S*hilao zhi* 釋老志, a history of Buddhism and Daoism during the Northern Wei:

> over Huishi's tomb was set a stone, and in a chapel his likeness was drawn. Throughout the time of the persecution of the Dharma [446-452], it still stood whole."[419]

By the Tang dynasty, mummies and portraits were increasingly placed inside monasteries. Also, mummies became less common, while portraits, including portrait sculptures in clay, lacquer or stone and images made of bone and ashes (*guhui xiang* 骨灰像) gained in popularity. Notably, this indicates a change in the visuality of the relic and physical presence of the abbot, now an object of viewing and worship within a temple, in the form of a portrait. Moreover, we can associate at least three types of practices of viewing, veneration and collection for these portrait images. First, the painted portrait was widely used as part of funeral and memorial rites, and it was kept in the Chan patriarchs hall discussed earlier in Chapter One. A detailed description of the use of portraits of abbots in Song funerary rites may be found in the most influential Song monastic code, the above-mentioned *Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery* from the year 1103. An abbot's coffin, the *Rules* note, should be placed on the western side of the dharma hall, while a life-size portrait of him sits in his dais where he normally teaches and receives worship:

> having prepared the dharma hall, then beginning with the chief mourner everyone prostrates to the portrait in order [of seniority]. Afterwards, the stewards, prefects, close disciples, and the whole monk assembly pay their respects to the chief mourner.

[419] Foulk and Sharf 1993: 165.

> Then beginning with the chief mourner, everyone mutually consoles each other in order [of seniority]. If there are lay persons from outside the monastery who have come to mourn, then the outer prefect should lead them up to the dharma hall. [Once there,] the inner prefect should lead them up to the portrait where they should burn incense and make prostrations. Then they should pay their respects to the chief mourner, the stewards, the head seat, and go to console the close disciples, who are under the canopy. Afterwards, they should retire and have tea with the chief mourner, and the outer guest prefect will lead them out.[420]

Additionally, in the Song patriarchs' hall, portraits served as representations of the genealogy of the abbots of a particular monastery. This was a break from the tradition of Tang portrait halls, which depicted the genealogy of the Chan lineage. Since abbots of Song Chan monasteries could be from any of the branches of Chan's transmission, it would have been an impossible task to depict the genealogical line back to Bodhidharma of every single abbot. Also, Chan abbots could change monasteries and the portrait of one abbot could be found in different monasteries' portrait halls. Thus, portraits of recent abbots increased in number, and they often supplanted portraits of early patriarchs. In fact, Foulk and Sharf write that the only portraits of early patriarchs that were common to all Song Chan monasteries were the portraits of Bodhidharma and Baizhang Huaihai, the alleged author of the first Chan monastic code.[421] Many Chan monasteries simply had no direct connection with the early patriarchs. They had not become Chan monasteries until after the founding of the Northern Song, and their original founders might have been abbots from another Buddhist tradition. Often, Baizhang Huaihai was their only link to the early patriarchs.

Foulk and Sharf note that in addition to the portraits in Song and Yuan patriarchs' halls, sometimes alternative sets of portraits of the first six patriarchs were produced on paper and silk, as well as on stone and on woodblocks for rubbings and prints. While paper, silk and woodblock sets were meant to function indoors, the stone images were placed outside as a reference to the famous founders of the lineage, and of a particular monastery. The stone images of the early patriarchs are intriguing, since they form a visual contrast to the portraits inside. We do not know how these images were viewed and worshiped, but they may well have served to complement the lack of images of early patriarchs inside. Importantly, they are examples of the same theme of the Chan patriarch, in a different medium and visual context. A modern equivalent of this phenomenon is a set of six rubbings of portraits of Chan

[420] Cole 1996: 311.
[421] Foulk and Sharf 1993.

patriarchs in the Ayuwang temple today. On display in the "Hall of Cultural Relics", the set appeals to modern-day viewers in yet another visual context. Not much is known about these rubbings, but it is possible that they were made from a stone set that was once placed outside.

Finally, portraits of abbots in the Song dynasty were widely disseminated as talismanic objects, another major change in the visuality of the image of the Chan abbot. Foulk and Sharf argue that this function of abbots' portraits was an outgrowth of their original function as funerary objects, and that the dissemination of the portraits had much the same religious meaning as the dissemination of relics.

Wendi Adamek believes that Song portraits of Chan masters were similar in function to images of local deities and ancestral spirits.[422] While early portraits are still sacred relics, Song portraits bring Chan masters down to the level of household deities. Adamek writes that this distinction can also be derived from developments in literary genre of portrait eulogies, discussed in Chapter Three. Prior to the Song, disciples would write eulogies for portraits of Chan masters. In fact, Adamek's study is an attempt to reconstruct a portrait of the early Chan master Wuzhu, based on portrait eulogies written by his disciples. In contrast, Song eulogies were mostly written by Chan masters themselves, and collected in Chan discourse records.

The development of portraits of historical abbots from relics to entities in patriarchs' halls and widely disseminated talismanic objects, and concomitant forms of viewing, collecting, organizing and venerating the abbots' image underscore the centrality of this figure in Chan practice. Similar to images of wandering saints, different forms of viewing, collecting and venerating the abbot's image could occur simultaneously. Pilgrims could travel to the sixth patriarch Huineng's tomb in Caoxi while portraits of abbots were made and distributed by followers of Chan masters, and ordered by disciples and devotees. Buildings in temple complexes could be named after abbots and objects related to them could be placed inside them, such as in the case of Yongming Yanshou at the Jingci temple discussed above. The variety in the visuality of these objects and images is evidence of their centrality for Chan.

[422] Adamek 2003.

In *Ox-herding Painting in the Sung Dynasty*, Scarlett Ju-yu Jang writes that the ox and its herdsman is one of the most popular subjects in Song painting.[423] Indeed, particularly in the Southern Song, the ox appears regularly on hanging scrolls, handscrolls and album leaves in silk, attributed to such court painters as Li Di 李迪 (c. 1163-1225) and Ma Lin. These are typically pastoral scenes that pay attention to the particular time of the day and the season. The landscape is minimal, with a few trees, a river bank or a mountain path. The focus is on the oxen and their herders that move about the compositions conveying a sense of ease. Oxen are rendered walking briskly, while herdsmen may be playing the flute or trying to catch a bamboo-leaf hat blown off by the storm. Simultaneously, artists do not forget the hardships of this life. Jang shows that there are images of "chilly, early spring and piercing, snowy winter", too.

By the time of the Song dynasty, the ox had long been used as a symbol or metaphor for a range of ideas. The ox's strength was believed to give fertility to the soil, while its unrestrained nature was a metaphor for freedom and eremitism. Ox-herding pictures were presented as gifts in court circles, and used in moral and political rhetoric. Particularly, the ox came to represent the ideal of retiring from officialdom and living in the countryside.

In the Song Chan establishment, the ox was widely used as a metaphor, too. The best-known example of this is the Chan practice of illustrating the so-called "ox-herding poems". These were series of ten or twelve pictures that accompanied poems of ox-herding composed by Chan monks. The pictures were cut into woodblocks and printed. They describe how a herdsman slowly tames a wild ox. In the last pictures, the herdsman and the ox both disappear, or the herdsman returns, sometimes without the ox. The metaphorical use of this theme is based on classical Buddhist scriptures that compare the controlling of the mind to the tending of an ox.

In concurrence with earlier research that claims that ox-herding pictures could have been used as teaching aids in the Song, Jang believes that Chan monks used this theme to assist their students from being misled by the abstruse nature of the discourse records.[424] The pictures took into account pupils' different capacities for grasping "Chan truth" and simplified Chan teachings for them. However, interestingly,

[423] Jang 1992.
[424] Yü 1989.

she writes that there were also variations on the theme of the ox in painting in Chan circles. Thus, again, we find the depiction of a single theme in different visual forms, with concomitant visualities. The pictures and paintings in question are not only remarkable with regard to their attention to visual detail, but also with regard to the way in which they appeal to different kinds of viewers.

Jang notes three types of Chan paintings of oxen. First, each of the woodblock pictures could be painted as an individual painting, disconnected from its sequence in the series. Chan monks also painted oxen that visualized dialogues recorded in the discourse records, such as the dialogue between Baizhang Huaihai and Changqing Da'an 長慶大安. In this conversation, Baizhang compares knowing the Buddha to returning home on the back of an ox, and this is the motif of several Chan monks' paintings of the theme. Finally, the Chan monk Weizheng 維政 (985-1045) is also often represented in painting accompanied by an ox. This is based on Weizheng's biography, that tells us that this monk wandered about for thirty years riding on a yellow ox, with his scripture scrolls and flask hung from its horns.

According to Jang:

> [Ox-herding] paintings by Chan amateurs were never intended to be visually appealing through seasonal effects, amusing pictorial anecdotes, or beautifully rendered details in the landscape. Chan painters simply represented the ox and its herdsman in a sketchy landscape to illustrate the conception of ox-herding as the allegory of attaining enlightenment.[425]

However, if we consider some examples more closely, we find plenty of attention to visual detail in Chan pictures and paintings of this theme. In the series of ten ox-herding pictures that Jang reproduces in her article, the landscape changes in every picture. According to the accompanying poem, the last scene takes place in moonlight. Here, we see the herdboy clapping his hands in a landscape with trees, mountains and clouds. The moon shines above him, and just below the moon, the artist has carved a depiction of the Seven Stars. To my knowledge this is an unusual detail in any Chinese carving or painting, and it is certainly not mentioned in the poem on the ox-herding picture.

Similarly, Chan paintings of the ox-herding theme play with visual details and interpretation of the image. These paintings may at times show even less landscape

[425] Jang 1992: 83.

than paintings of the same theme by court painters, but that does not make them less appealing. For instance, Jang discusses a painting of a herdboy walking with his ox under a tree with an inscription by the monk Gaofeng Yuanmiao. None of the objects mentioned in the inscription, including a cape, a hat and a flute, is actually in the painting. Therefore, Jang writes that the inscription and the painting need to be apprehended "in an intuitive Chan sense, rather than through logical analysis". She believes that the paintings are of a different category than the ox-herding pictures. While the pictures "represent a step-by-step process of reaching enlightenment", the paintings "are meant to evoke an instant grasp of the whole Chan truth".

While the materiality of the pictures is obviously different from that of the paintings, I submit that for both types of images we need to go beyond concepts such as "intuitive Chan sense", and subject them to an analysis which will reveal attention to the visual. In fact, the painting with Gaofeng Yuanmiao's inscription shows that in Chan paintings of oxen, just as in paintings of wandering saints, monks' inscriptions work together with the image to question interpretations of the visual, too.

Further, when we consider types of viewers of ox-herding pictures and paintings and their opinions, the impact of the different visualities of this theme becomes clear. Jang quotes the comments of the Song official Lou Yue 樓鑰 (1137-1213) who viewed ox-herding paintings by the Chan monk Zhirong. Lou writes:

> It has been six years since I departed from the old mountains to hold a low-ranking official position; the mountains only appear in my dreams. Why did I make an effort to bind myself to official cap and robe; while I envy the carefree oxen returning home?[426]

Obviously, Lou considers Zhirong's painting with the implication of the ideal of eremitism, rather than in the context of a Buddhist ideal of controlling the mind. This follows from the concept of the ox as a theme valued by different groups in Song society. Also, this leads to the question of other visualities of this theme in Chan. In an example from modern times, carvings on a stone fence surrounding several buildings of the Ayuwang temple today contain images of oxen. It is unclear whether these are from the ten ox-herding pictures or from different anecdotes, but the existence of these images indicates the necessity to study the visual impact of a theme that appears in different visual forms. Just as the wandering saints appear in all kinds

[426] Jang 1992: 64.

of images and practices, the ox-herding pictures appear variously in Chan prints, paintings and possibly in Chan architecture, as part of Chan temples.

## 4. RITUALS OF VIEWING AND COLLECTING IN CHINA AND JAPAN

As part of the Chan establishment, the wandering saints appear in various visual forms. They can be seen in paintings, on steles, in sculptures, as part of temple architecture and as part of everyday monastic practice, in the form of the Holy Monk. They are also mentioned in texts of the Chan canon. In Chan temples, these visual forms of the wandering saints interact with monks, nuns and the laity, who sometimes describe their experiences in comments recorded in gazetteers, or through inscriptions on art, such as the inscription for Daoji at Jingci, or the inscription for Hanshan and Shide at the Guoqing temple. As art objects, some of these visual representations became part of wider circles of viewing and collecting, as they circulated in the Song and Yuan art market.

One of the most important developments in the early Song dynasty was the immense growth of private wealth. A new class of rich merchants dominated life in the Song capitals of Kaifeng and Hangzhou. This group lent money to the court and to officials, and many married members of the imperial household. These merchants saw art as a highly profitable commodity, and many were itinerant dealers and collectors. In the Southern Song and Yuan, Hangzhou was an important center for the exchange and circulation of art. The *Record of Clouds and Mist Passing Before One's Eyes* (*Yunyan guoyan lu* 雲煙過眼錄) by Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298), recently translated by Ankeney Weitz, is a detailed list of art objects that Zhou saw in more than 40 private collections in this city between 1275 and 1296.[427] It includes numerous paintings of Buddhist and Daoist subjects, including monks.

Based on Weitz' research, the present section explores certain aspects of the Hangzhou art market. While I have not found any direct reference to images of wandering saints, some of the issues of the Hangzhou market are relevant to the subject, particularly, the processes that govern the exchange and circulation of art. These conditions are arguably part of a ritual in which art functions as a social currency, or vehicle of interaction. This is not unique to China, and I compare the

[427] Weitz 2002.

social characteristics of collecting art in China to an example from seventeenth-century Italy. Both societies perceived the exchange of art to be an expression of status, negotiated through a network of social relations. Also, I consider two references to paintings of Chan saints in private collections. One of these references describes the viewing of a painting in considerable detail. Again, the description is indicative of a ritual setting in which a specific conversation is performed in front of an image.

Next, this section considers issues of the relocation of paintings of wandering saints to Japan. It compares processes of exchange and circulation at the Hangzhou art market to similar processes in Japan, where the paintings entered collections of Zen temples at the same time that they became part of collections of Ashikaga shōguns. Rituals of viewing and collecting in China and Japan have shaped how we view these paintings today.

## THE ART MARKET IN HANGZHOU AND A PAINTING OF BUDAI IN THE COLLECTION OF WANG ZAO (1079-1154)

### *Art, commodity and the art market in the Song and Yuan*

In a study of painting and commerce in the Northern Song dynasty, Liu Heping compares Northern Song China to seventeenth-century Amsterdam.[428] The new economy of the Northern Song capital Kaifeng attracted people interested in financial opportunities. For art, it set conditions for the rise of a "painting culture". Paintings were bought and sold as valuable and collectable items, and they were accepted as payments. Paintings were used as attractions in shops, restaurants, social gatherings and parties, and presented as gifts. Thematically, paintings employed new subjects related to economic life. Also, painting became a respectable profession, and merchants became competitive art patrons. Wealthy merchants were often itinerant art dealers and collectors, while smaller merchants could furnish their stores with paintings, too. Liu uses an interesting anecdote to illustrate the interest and influence of a rich Song merchant who collected a set of scrolls of paintings of the sixteen

[428] Liu 1997.

Arhats. This account also offers evidence for ways in which images could circulate between temples and private collections:

> A certain foot soldier by the name of Li Gui went straight into a Buddhist monastery and took away the 'Sixteen Arhats' scrolls painted by Qihan [Wang Qihan 王齊翰 fl.961-975]. Quickly he put them up for sale at a market. A rich merchant named Liu Yuansi bought them with an offer of 400 taels of silver. Returning to the capital Kaifeng, Yuansi left the paintings in pawn to Master Qingjiao of the Pagoda of Universal Fullness in the Xiangguo Monastery; but when Yuansi later came back to redeem the paintings, Qingjiao simply hid them away.
>
> A lawsuit was brought before the capital prefecture's office. At that time, Taizong was just appointed Capital Governor. He carefully examined the evidence of the case. In the end, Qingjiao admitted his wrongs and brought forward the paintings in question. Taizong was so much amazed by the wonder of the paintings that he took the paintings himself and dismissed both parties with a reward to each of one thousand taels of silver. Just sixteen days later, Taizong ascended to the throne. He named the paintings the 'Destiny Arhats of National Treasure' and stored them in the Imperial Library.[429]

This anecdote tells us that merchant Liu probably had knowledge of the scrolls and their painter, since he offered a large amount of silver to bring them into his possession, and although he had to pawn them to the Xiangguo temple, he returned to redeem them. Moreover, it tells us of the power of this merchant, who, when he realized that he was being cheated, took the priest of the state-patronized Xiangguo temple, one of the Northern Song's most important temples, to court.

The economic developments in the Song affected the lives of merchants as much as those of the earlier aristocracy of scholar-officials. Liu writes that the latter group was economically vulnerable, and shows how this appears in a note by Su Shi to his friend, the bamboo painter Wen Tong. Su tells Wen that his income from writing compositions for others is insufficient, while Wen's pictures of bamboo earn better money. He therefore asks Wen to paint some bamboo for him, or else he will have to forge Wen's paintings or sell gifts he received from Wen for silk.[430] The humorous undertone of this note is obvious. Still, it is an indication of the living conditions of scholar-officials in the Song, and it invites investigation into the role of art as a commodity in Song society ---topics which have remained understudied to date.

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[429] Liu 1997: 10-11.
[430] Liu 1997: 29.

Igor Kopytoff explores issues of art and commodity in *The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process*.[431] He describes the drive inherent in every exchange system towards commoditization, or making each thing exchangeable for more and more other things, and making more different things more widely exchangeable. The counterdrive to commoditization is culture. Culture singularizes objects or classes of objects and precludes them from being commoditized, and sometimes it resingularizes what has been commoditized. Often, power asserts itself by insisting on its right to singularize. For instance, the British monarchy reserved to itself the "Star of India" as its "crown jewel" removing this object from the commodity sphere, and Suku kings of Zaire resingularized eighteenth-century European ceramic mugs, standard trade items brought by the Portuguese, as ritual paraphernalia. Kopytoff shows that singularization and commoditization are important cultural and cognitive processes that invite the study of a "biography of things". This biography would look at objects as "culturally constructed entities with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into culturally constructed categories".

According to Kopytoff, complex societies are characterized by the existence of innumerable schemes of valuation and singularization, devised by individuals and groups, that stand in conflict with each other as well as with public commoditization. In such societies, there are continuous shifts and differences in whether and when objects are commodities and justifications for these shifts and differences are imported from autonomous systems outside the system of exchange, such as aesthetics, morality or religion. He provides the example of a proposal to install a statue of the cinematic boxing hero Rocky, used in a movie set, in front of The Art Museum in Philadelphia in 1983. The proposal resulted in a public controversy: Philadelphia's working class sector thought the statue was a worthy public monument, while those whose social identities were vested in the museum thought it was a piece of junk "deserving instant recommoditization as scrap metal". The latter won this issue of singularization and commoditization "linked to disparate and morally charged systems", since they "were in a position to clothe their argument in a garb of public aesthetics, a field in which they held cultural hegemony". At the time, the statue was

[431] Kopytoff 1986.

installed next to a stadium in South Philadelphia, however, in 2006, it was returned to the museum again.

In complex societies, many people consider things called "art" superior to the world of commerce. This high value does not reside in the exchange system, since art objects in complex societies do not function as, for instance brass rods functioned in the Tiv culture of Nigeria before the colonial period ---there, brass rods were used to bring in objects of superior prestige belonging to higher exchange spheres, such as cloth and wives. Instead, this value is located in other systems, such as aesthetics and style, in which art is deemed priceless. Kopytoff notes that this leads to constant confrontation "with seeming paradoxes of value" when art "simultaneously participates in cognitively distinct yet effectively intermeshed exchange spheres", for instance when museums need to name prices to insure their holdings, or when art is bought and sold on the art market. Museums and art dealers name prices, are accused of transforming art into a commodity and, in response, blame each other for creating and maintaining a commodity market. Thus, Kopytoff writes, it is culturally significant that there is "an inner compulsion to defend oneself, to others and to oneself, against the charge of 'merchandising art'" and an art object's singularity is confirmed by its "intermittent forays into the commodity sphere, quickly followed by reentries into the closed sphere of singular 'art'".

The cultural significance and social characteristics of art exchange and art collection are also central to Genevieve Warwick's study of Padre Sebastiano Resta's drawing albums in seventeenth-century Italy.[432] Resta was an avid collector who developed a peculiar system to donate to church charity. He solicited gifts of drawings from artists which he collated in albums and presented as gifts to the European elite, who were then expected to give generously to his trust. Warwick writes that art-giving and art-collecting created bonds of credit and debt between friends and up and down a hierarchy of patronage in Resta's social network. While giving away albums for charity was unusual, gift-giving as an aestheticized form of trade was not, and participants were aware of the logic of the gift that obliged them to give away in order to receive. For instance, by giving albums to kings and bishops, Resta ennobled the status of his friends' sketches, while also seeking higher patronage for them, and he often made them small returns from what patrons bestowed on him. Receivers of gifts

[432] Warwick 1997.

were honor-bound to return the favor. However, Warwick writes, "etiquette forbade pressing debtors directly, since this would belie the gift's very nature and so destroy its honorable return". Thus, when a certain bishop refused payment, Resta hoped to shame him into respecting the obligation to give by sending him further gifts. At the center of a system of circulation of wealth, Resta saw for himself a prestigious position, not just as a connoisseur but, more importantly, as someone who possessed the power, inherent to the gift, to bond others through debt. Since Resta's system was a good work, he also considered God as a participant, and expected Him to return what He was given in charity. Simultaneously this meant that when Resta's network did not function properly, for instance when the above-mentioned bishop refused to pay, Resta's social and religious status were in jeopardy.

Importantly, Resta was aware of the monetary value of the drawings he received and gave away. He did not ask prices, but often described the market value of drawings outside gift-giving to his patrons, and he varied prices according to types of patrons and the amount of return he could expect. Still, Warwick emphasizes that Resta's awareness of the market value of his gifts does not mean that his practices of art-collecting and art-giving can be subsumed under the concept of "capitalist trading practices". Obviously he had to measure success in financial terms, since his endeavour was to convert the value of the albums into funds for charity. But the means to the end of profit was a reaction against that very purpose. Warwick shows that in notes to patrons and artists, Resta used a rhetoric of patronage, love and friendship that "resisted the freedom and anonymity of capitalist trade". His network was a closed group of people he considered his social equals with whom he exchanged friendship and goods. Within this network, art-giving functioned as a token of relationship and was a total social phenomenon, economic, as well as moral, spiritual and aesthetic, while art "was a focus of love and desire" that bound viewers in alliance with givers through the shared experience of visual delectation.

In early Yuan Hangzhou, the trade of art took place in public and private locations, and collectors would visit antique shops, painting galleries and open markets. In her research on the Hangzhou art market in the Yuan, Weitz remarks that contemporaneous colophons, inscriptions and catalogues note the acquisition of an artwork by purchase, sometimes including the price paid, and she emphasizes that the "acknowledgement of the mercantile aspects of art-collecting has had a longer history

than envisioned by some modern scholars".[433] She also mentions the Guangjiku 廣濟庫, a government storehouse where the Yuan government sold objects confiscated from the Song imperial art collections. While Yuan rulers, following precedence, shipped most of the former dynasty's collections to their new capital Dadu, Weitz writes that the sale of the remaining property indicates that the Yuan government believed that some art objects "served only as commodities to be used for the economic benefit of the state", and according to Weitz "this ambivalence played a significant role in the growth of the private art market".

Weitz is right to emphasize the need to study the economics of the trade of art in China. We also need to acknowledge the particular nature of art as a commodity. In Yuan Hangzhou, the exchange and collection of art was a total social phenomenon, just as art-giving was a total social phenomenon in Padre Resta's network in seventeenth-century Italy. Weitz writes that in Song and Yuan texts the exchange of art took place in a pure sphere of aesthetic pleasure, and art objects were bartered rather than bought or sold. This was a long-preferred mode of acquisition through which a collector could maintain refinement and share aesthetic pleasure with the other transactor. Also, in the early Yuan art market, art functioned as vehicle for social interaction, often between southerners or former Song aristocrats, and new Yuan officials from the north. This market was populated by a variety of characters, with a range of motives. There were deserters from the Song army and bureaucracy who used particular works to project a positive image of themselves, as well as Yuan officials whom even Song loyalists appreciated because of their talent and connoisseurial skills. In these networks of collectors, art objects were singularized as they moved in and out of the commodity sphere, too. Weitz writes that "aesthetic enjoyment was itself a valuable commodity among Chinese scholar-officials". Thus, even if art objects were given as gifts or bribes, as was common in the Yuan, this "did not necessarily diminish the object's artistic significance", and giving art was still purer than giving cash or jewels.

[433] Weitz 1997.

Part of the social ritual of the transaction of art were go-betweens, usually connoisseurs who initiated or mediated between transactors. In fact, Zhou Mi, author of the *Record of Clouds and Mist Passing Before One's Eyes* may have been an agent who provided connoisseurial services to collectors. Zhou served in the Song bureaucracy, but lost his official position due to the dynasty's collapse. While at first he mourns this event in poetry, Zhou eventually adapts to the new circumstances and establishes himself as a historian and a connoisseur of artworks.

In China, the *Record of Clouds* is the first catalogue to organize private art collections under individual collectors' names. The text seems to have been based on *Random Jottings from the Hall of Elegant Intent* (*Zhiyatang zachao* 志雅堂雜鈔), notes by Zhou that describe objects he saw in collectors' homes in Hangzhou between 1289 and 1295. Zhou's list of collectors is evidence of his wide social circles: they include northerners, southerners, Song officials who had defected to the Yuan and foreigners, such as a Uighur official.

The length of Zhou's description of their collections varies. For some items, there are only titles, while for others Zhou provides extensive commentaries including information on colophons and seals. According to Weitz' index, paintings form the largest category of objects in the *Record of Clouds*, followed by calligraphy, books and objects such as bronzes and jades.[434] Further, 112 of the 268 paintings of Yuan collectors and 93 of the 227 paintings of Song collectors are figure paintings, the largest subcategory for both collectors. Of these, 32 Yuan paintings and 13 Song paintings are of Buddhist figures. For the Yuan collectors, this is the largest subcategory of figure painting; for Song collectors, it is the second largest subcategory.

As noted above, there is no direct reference to paintings of wandering saints in the *Record of Clouds*. However, there are at least seven references to paintings of monks, some in major collections. Most intriguing is the reference for a painting of a "cliff-dwelling monk" in the collection of the famous painter, calligrapher and official Zhao Mengfu. Zhou describes this painting as:

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[434] Weitz 2002.

> Extremely old. Inscribed by Emperor Huizong. A foreign monk is cleaning out his ears; his mouth and nose are wrinkled in the direction of the ear as he makes an expression of complete contentment.[435]

Wang Qihan, mentioned earlier as painter of the Arhat scrolls owned by the Northern Song merchant Liu, is credited as the artist of this work, too. This painting may well have been of an Arhat, since many of these saints were illustrated as having a foreign physique. However, the description could match any of the paintings of a wandering saint, too.

A number of other references in Zhou's text are similarly ambiguous. There is for instance a painting of "drunken Daoist and Buddhist monks", and another titled *Reading Sūtras*. There are no descriptions for either of these paintings, but the titles mark the possibility that these were paintings of wandering saints. In other entries, the reference to the painter leads one to think so. For instance, Zhou makes note of a painting of a "high-minded monk chanting sūtras" by the artist Qiao Zhongchang 喬仲常 (early twelfth century). Qiao, who painted religious subjects in the "outline drawing" manner, followed the artist Li Gonglin in style and in themes. Two paintings of wandering saints are attributed to Li, and it would not be surprising if Qiao's painting was of the same subject.

Finally, there are two entries that specifically mention Chan. The first is a painting titled *Asking about Chan amid Pines and Rocks* in the collection of Zhuang Su, author of the *Supplement to "Painting" Continued* and an official in the Song. The painting is by Sun Mengqing 孫夢卿 (10th century), who admired the painter Wu Daozi and tried to emulate him in his paintings of Buddhist icons. The painting contains an inscription and two seals of the Huizong emperor, and, according to Zhou, "one of the monks is painted in a very marvelous way". The title of this painting recalls numerous Song and Yuan examples of paintings that describe dialogues between Chan masters, or between Chan masters and lay persons.[436] The second entry that mentions Chan is called "The Second Stele Inscription for Chan Master Tianyi", and credited to Mi Fu. This entry probably refers to a rubbing of a stele with Mi Fu's calligraphy. Unfortunately, the reference in Weitz' index does not correspond to the same reference number in her translation, or to the included original Chinese text, and we do not know whether Zhou said anything more about this object.

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[435] Weitz 2002: 179.

[436] See for instance Levine and Lippit 2007: 130-138.

References to paintings and other art objects connected to the Chan establishment in the *Record of Clouds* may be scarce, but the number of Buddhist figural subjects and paintings of monks is noteworthy. It indicates that these images were in circulation in the art market of the time. In fact, if we combine the categories of "Buddhist", "Daoist" and "general religious figural subjects" and "hermits" as presented in Weitz' index, the category of religious figural paintings turns out to be one of the most important categories of paintings in the collections of Song and Yuan collectors.

There are two direct references to paintings of wandering saints in private collections. First, in the Ming dynasty, the official and collector Li Rihua mentions in his collected works a handscroll titled *Ten Wandering Saints* (*Shi sansheng* 十散聖). According to Li, the scroll was painted by the early twelfth-century monk and painter Fanlong 梵隆, and each of the ten figures was accompanied by a poem by the Song scholar Wang Yingsun. Yoshiaki Shimizu provides a list of the ten figures who appear after Bodhidharma in the following order: Baozhi, Fahua Zhiyan, Budai, Puhua, Hanshan, Shide, Shandao, Guquan Dadao, Zhutou, Xianzi.[437] Shimizu notes that Baozhi, Fahua Zhiyan, Budai, Hanshan and Shide are listed as saints in Chan flame records. Puhua, Shandao, Guquan Dadao, Zhutou and Xianzi are never cited along with Budai, Hanshan and Shide; however, Puhua, Guquan Dadao and Xianzi can be found in the flame records in other categories than that of the saints.

In addition to a reference to a format of images of wandering saints that no longer survives, and to categories of saints in Chan, the reference to this scroll is evidence for how images of this kind were collected and viewed. The scroll eventually entered the Qing imperial collections, and according to the *Bidian chulin*, a Qing inventory, it was done in colour on silk and contained three inscriptions.[438] The first is the series of poems by Wang Yingsun, dated to 1243. This is followed by an inscription by the famous Ming painter and art critic Dong Qichang, who writes that the paintings are of the sixteen Arhats, and the style reminds him of paintings of the monk Guanxiu. Finally, Li Rihua also inscribes the scroll. He praises Wang Yingsun for his loyalty to the Song when he says that Wang never served the Mongols. He also says that "Wang took Chan discipline and understood it" and that he painted "divine priests who are in possession of spiritual attributes". Next, he corrects Dong Qichang

[437] Shimizu 1974: 182.
[438] Shimizu 1974: notes page 121.

by saying that these are not Arhats and "be it Buddhist sūtra or excellent piece of calligraphy, only he who possesses the right eyes can make the proper distinction".[439] Interestingly, the Qing inventory describes the scroll as "Arhats and lofty priests by Guanxiu".

While the circumstances under which these viewers considered the scroll are unclear, it appears that each viewer considered both the painter and the inscriber of the poems, and the theme of the painting. Further, while none of these inscribers ever met, later viewers comment on previous viewers, and especially Li Rihua leaves a terse note to Dong Qichang. By leaving comments on the scroll, the viewers adhere to a long tradition of inscribing artworks in China, a ritual of viewing and collecting art. They show that they are aware of a Chan connection for the theme, although only Li Rihua identifies the saints correctly.

The second example of a reference to a painting of a wandering saint in a private collection is an interesting anecdote of a viewing session in the Southern Song. In the 1155 *Yunwo jitan* the Chan abbot Xiaoyin Zhongwen (act. c. 1128-1162) describes how the scholar Wang Zao meets with Chan priests to look at a painting of Budai. Wang is on vacation, and the painting of Budai hangs on his wall.

> There on the wall was Budai, which is a famous painting. The official Wang, pointing at the painting, asked the priests 'What does the painting mean?' The priest Cishou replied 'The painting depicts new ideas which issue from the strictest of rules as well as the profound mystery lodged in the realm of the freest of the free.' Then Wang asked again 'Is Budai enlightened?' Thereupon Fodeng replied 'No.' 'Why not?' asked Wang. Fodeng's reply was 'If he were enlightened he would not raise questions.' Wang then burst into great laughter.[440]

The nature of the conversation that Wang Zao has before a painting of Budai is very different from the comments that Dong Qichang and Li Rihua leave on the scroll of wandering saints above. Wang and the Chan priests do not talk about painters or styles of paintings. Instead, this dialogue recalls Chan encomia on paintings of the saints discussed earlier in Chapter Three. Thus, the session describes a certain discourse performance in front of the image. Of course, this conversation is recorded in the work of a Chan priest. The text also tells us that Wang would meet with Chan priests and ask questions whenever he had time to do so. Wang Zao's viewing session

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[439] Shimizu 1974: notes page 121.
[440] Shimizu 1974: 177.

is evidence for one way in which images of wandering saints were collected and viewed outside Chan temple complexes.

## ASHIKAGA SHŌGUNS AND ZEN TEMPLES: THE WANDERING SAINTS IN MUROMACHI JAPAN

The MOA holds a painting of Hanshan and Shide attributed to Liang Kai. The saints are shown together, their bodies barely separable from each other, while each looks to a different side, grinning. On the bottom left of the painting is a signature that reads "Liang Kai". On the top right is an impression of the seal of the sixth Ashikaga shōgun, Ashikaga Yoshinori 足利義教 (r. 1429-1441). The box in which the painting is kept contains a note by the celebrated tea master and calligrapher Kobori Enshū 小堀遠州 (1579-1647) saying that this painting was once part of the Higashiyama retreat.

In modern scholarship, until very recently, the Muromachi era (1338-1573) or the period during which the Ashikaga shōguns ruled Japan, was comparatively neglected. For this study this period is of special interest, since during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, numerous paintings of wandering saints were taken to Japan, where they entered the collections of the Ashikaga family and Japanese Zen temples. Rituals of viewing and collecting in these collections greatly influenced the interpretation of this art, and continue to shape ideas about these paintings today. Interestingly, in many cases we do not know why particular paintings were taken to Japan or who took them. It is also unclear how they were used in the doctrine and practice of Japanese Zen temples. What is clear is that Zen monks and Ashikaga shōguns together created an aesthetic culture in which the paintings and the saints acquired new visualities.

It is well known that the Zen establishment in Japan was closely connected to the court and the shōguns, the de facto rulers of Japan between the Heian and the Edo periods (794-1867). In the Muromachi period, the establishment had large numbers of followers among the military aristocracy and rich merchants, who profited from the increasing economic power of this age. In particular the strongly patronized Rinzai sect had its headquarters in Kyoto, the country's religious and cultural center. Akamatsu Toshihide and Philip Yampolsky write that we know very little of the

nature of Muromachi Zen.[441] They believe that while there is an emphasis on doctrinal study in the early Muromachi era, this becomes less in later periods. Instead, the esoteric was extremely popular in all Zen temples. While the doctrine and practice of Muromachi Zen awaits more research, scholars agree on the importance of Zen monks for cultural developments in this period, which were supported by the Ashikaga shōguns. Japanese Zen monks were the most important agents in the cultural exchange between China and Japan. They traveled to China to study with Chan abbots, and were often part of official trade missions. In China, they met scholar-officials and artists, and they brought back new ideas to Japan. Many became advisors to Ashikaga shōguns, who were eager to learn about China.

Cultural contact between China and Japan, and particularly the relocation of Chinese objects in Japan invite studies of "biographies of things", formulated by Kopytoff and mentioned in the discussion on art and commodity above. Kopytoff writes that biographies of things show "that what is significant about the adoption of alien objects is not the fact that they are adopted, but the way they are culturally redefined and put to use". Andrew Watsky focuses on objects connected to China in sixteenth-century Japan.[442] While his research deals with a later period, the biographies of the objects he discusses provide insight into how we can understand processes of the adoption and redefinition of paintings of eccentrics, too. In particular Watsky's discussion of two paintings of the *Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang* is important. First, he investigates the collection and display of a set of Chinese paintings of this theme by the monk-painter Yujian. *Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang* was a major theme in painting in China, and it was also highly valued in sixteenth-century tea circles in Japan. However, by that time, the paintings' visuality had changed entirely. Contemporaneous Japanese connoisseurs believed Yujian's scroll was created as a long handscroll, but the existing example had been dismembered and reconfigured into eight smaller views. Watsky writes that the alteration of format enabled the paintings to function well in a Japanese context of privileged presentation, particularly the viewing space of the tea ceremony room. There the paintings depicted locations in China that held major cultural weight to a wider audience, albeit still to an elite audience. Contemporaneous painting catalogues listed the owners of the paintings, generally the most influential people in Japan, thus increasing the Chinese

[441] Akamatsu and Yampolsky 1977.
[442] Watsky 2006.

paintings' Japanese significance. Next, Watsky compares this illustration of the theme to a Japanese interpretation by painter Kano Shōei (1519-1592) for the abbot's quarters at the Daitokuji Zen temple in Kyoto. This was a large-scale rendering covering eight sliding-door panels across two walls of the room. The painting echoes Yujian's version in its evocation of remote rural life; however, Watsky writes, no viewer would have mistaken Kano's painting for a Chinese original, nor would that misconception have been desired. Instead, he argues, Kano claimed and transformed the theme "in a way reminiscent of, though less violent than the cutting and remounting of Yujian's handscroll." He translated Chinese originals through previous Japanese precedent of composition and style across room-sized horizontal paintings, and his own brush. Thus, Watsky's examples describe the creation of a "reconfigured, imagined landscape of Chinese antiquity, relocated to Japan".

Modern scholarship on the Muromachi period reveals that processes for the translation and location of "China", Chinese art and Chinese paintings of wandering saints in Japan were very similar. Two important Ashikaga cultural centers, the Kitayama and Higashiyama retreats in Kyoto, contributed to this development. Established by the shōguns Yoshimitsu 義満 (r. 1368-1394) and Yoshimasa 義政 (r. 1443-1473) respectively, these were complexes that housed the Ashikaga collections as well as residences, where the shōguns engaged in aesthetic practices such as the tea ceremony.

In his research on Yoshimasa, Donald Keene expands on how paintings were viewed in the Higashiyama complex.[443] This retreat formed the realization of Yoshimasa's aesthetic concepts. He designed Higashiyama with attention to its natural surroundings, and the art he collected inside. Most importantly, he ordered paintings and ceramics from China, with the guidance of Zen priests.

Paintings were the primary decorations of the rooms, and were hung on walls above a table known as *oshiita*. Keene describes how this way of looking at paintings developed in Japan. In the Heian period (794-1185), paintings in Japan were in the form of horizontal scrolls that were not usually on view, or permanent decorations on walls and screens. In the Kamakura period (1185-1333), the hanging scroll was imported from China. First, this was difficult to employ in a Japanese situation. A lack of the use of furniture in Japanese interiors would cause the paintings to hang "naked

[443] Keene 2003.

against the walls". Therefore, a table was used on which other objects were placed. Eventually, the table was attached to the wall as a shelf. This developed into the modern-day *tokonoma* 床の間, which includes vertical columns that further frame the paintings. From an early period, the *oshiita* was the location for paintings of wandering saints, particularly Hanshan, Shide and Budai. Paintings of eccentrics in the Higashiyama retreat, then, are evidence of the relocation and cultural redefinition of a Chinese religious and artistic theme in Japan.

Nancy Wey offers early documentary evidence for similar processes in Japanese temples.[444] She quotes extensively from temple records which describe in detail how government offices present sets of paintings, often combinations of paintings of Bodhisattvas and those of eccentric monks, as gifts to temples, and how monks authenticate the paintings and inscribe them with titles. Moreover, officials are personally involved in arranging how the paintings should be viewed. Significantly, one of the earliest records of a painting of wandering saints in Japan is a note in the diary of the Zen monk Gidō Shūshin, discussed in Chapter Three, that the shōgun Yoshiakira 義詮 (r. 1358-1367) arranged a display of a combination of a painting of the Four Sleepers with one of Guanyin at Gidō's Enkaku temple. Thus, just as the Japanese interpretations of Yujian's *Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang* are symbols of the cultural importance of a distant, imagined landscape reconstructed in Japan, the collection and viewing of paintings of eccentrics symbolize the cultural significance of distant, legendary saints, relocated to Japan.

Notably, these are only the beginnings of biographies of the Chan eccentric theme in art. This chapter has traced patterns of viewing and collecting of images of the eccentrics from Chan temples to the public sphere of the Hangzhou art market to even wider circles of exchange between China and Japan. Visual representations of the wandering saints have since traveled further. Every new location contributes to the story of this theme, and as the saints are part of religion and art in the modern world, biographies of their depictions are still being written today.

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[444] Wey 1974.

# Conclusion

In Hanshan's collected writings is the following poem:

> Whether there is or is not an individual subject,
> and whether this is I or not I?
> and so on and so forth…I sink
> into speculative reverie almost
> out of time as I sit
> leaning against the crag
> until the green grass
> sprouts between my feet,
> and on my head
> the red dust settles;
> suddenly I perceive
> the village people come
> and offer wine and cakes
> to my departed ghost.[445]

These melancholic and humorous lines can be said to perfectly describe Hanshan, his fellow eccentrics and their reception histories in early modern China. These exceptional monks and wandering saints were independent souls, able to travel beyond the boundaries of religious and social traditions in thought, speech and action, and thus appealing to a great number and a great variety of people.

In the Song and Yuan dynasties, the saints developed into emblems of religious culture, a term I use in Catherine Bell's definition.[446] Bell uses "religious culture" to describe religious experience based on symbolic activities, rather than based on religious and social groups, such as "Buddhists", "Daoists", "popular" and "elite". The Chan eccentrics and their representations in texts and art were, and still are, symbolic activities, or concepts that are subject to processes of production, viewing and understanding across various groups in traditional and modern society. The study of these concepts and processes underscores the necessity to move away from preconceived notions that indicate what particular religious traditions are like and how they relate to other traditions, or that prioritize certain types of art over others. It illuminates the complexities of both religious belief and the art world, where the wandering saints and their representations bring together different people, ideas and forms of artistic expression. Particularly, the study of the theme of the Chan eccentrics challenges long-held perceptions of "art", "Chan" and "Chan art".

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[445] Hobson 2003: 108.
[446] Bell 1989.

A popular and recurring theme in paintings in ink and colour, and on paper and silk, as well as in engravings, rubbings and stone sculptures, artistic representations of the wandering saints call for a reconsideration of fundamental issues in art history. Reflecting alternative aesthetic priorities as well as the cultural worlds in which those priorities existed, these representations underscore the need to frame art history from different localities and positions. Through unique visual characteristics which emphasize issues of movement, space and liveliness, and read in correspondence with abbots' writings collected in the Chan canon, representations of the wandering saints convey the same visual reality as portraits of historical personalities. These representations question the validity of tricky, but important distinctions in art history between portraiture and the larger field of figural art.

In different artistic media, images of the saints retain their visual characteristics while displaying varied visualities, with religious, artistic and sociological effects. This underscores the thematic unity of the subject, and it highlights the necessity to study representations in different media in conjunction with each other. Thus, this study approaches portraits of eccentrics not as the result of the efforts of particular abbots and artists, but thematically, as a subject in Song and Yuan art, with an emphasis on social structures that connect the various representations of the saints, such as the production and viewing of the images and their exchange, translocation and collection. These structures enable us to compare a sculpture of Budai in an imperial cave site to a hanging scroll of the same monk with an inscription by an abbot, or the characteristics of exchange and collection in seventeenth-century Italy to those of thirteenth-century Hangzhou, or the Ashikaga shōguns, contributing to a fuller understanding of interpretations of this artistic theme, through its interaction with various religious and social groups. Images of the eccentrics may have been appreciated in small circles of viewers, as much as they were objects of contemplation for wider circles of devotees, important illustrations in a Daoist temple, or beneficial deities in Buddhist temples on engravings and sculptures donated by religious associations. In the environment of the Chan temple, images of the saints interacted with monks and lay viewers, while in the Yuan art market and in Muromachi Japan, they became collectors' items, and in exhibitions of Zen painting today, they are marketable as sheer spectacle. These results encourage the study of the complete artistic experience of other themes in China, such as portraits of historical persons and landscapes.

The concept of the eccentric has been elementary to Chan from its beginnings, and its exceptional interest in the saints knows no match in any other tradition. The Song and Yuan Chan establishment advanced the wandering saints as its spiritual elite in art, text and practice. The position of the saints in the Chan pantheon and their treatment in Chan texts and images are evidence of this tradition's distinctive quality of questioning social norms. Of course, this appears from uniquely Chan traditions such as test cases, and from Chan's reverence for its eccentric patriarchs, but it is most prominent in the establishment's attention for the wandering saints, whose names can be found throughout the Chan canon, and whose images reveal, through their visual characteristics, a deep and exclusive interest in this kind of personality.

In modern scholarship, Chan questions have often been interpreted as pronounced judgments, resulting in the popular definition of this tradition as one that discards texts and images. Consequently, the Song Chan attention to texts and art has been regarded as a sign of the degeneration of the Chan establishment. Recent studies have contradicted this by arguing that religious practice in the Chan establishment was never radically different from that in other Buddhist temples. Also, these studies have come to view the Song dynasty as Chan's "Golden Age". This research contributes to that development by proposing a new view of the relationship between art and Chan. It does so not by upholding a category of "Chan art", but through emphasizing the rewards of investigating the changing nature of the relationship between Chan and art.

Chan abbots' encomia, the texts inscribed on portraits of wandering saints, stake the strongest claims for Chan's unique understanding of art. These statements show their writers' deep concern with notions of "image" and "likeness". Further, uses of objects in Chan monasteries, including uses of images of eccentrics, show widely different visualities and concomitant practices of viewing, collection and veneration. For instance, while the Holy Monk was worshiped in the form of emptiness framed by a seat, a portrait of the eccentric Daoji was engraved near the well associated with one of his legends in the Jingci temple. This is evidence of Chan's critical attention to visual experience, and its manipulation of vision.

Most importantly, the study of art for the Chan establishment describes Chan as a rich field of visual practice in continuous communication with other worlds of art in China. The theme of the wandering saints attracted a variety of artists who each brought their distinctive training and background to this field. The images were then

viewed, venerated, collected and interpreted in progressively wider circles of monastic and lay viewers. This invites exploration of Chan monasteries as centres of art collection and art circulation, and of the contributions of the Chan establishment to religion and art in China.

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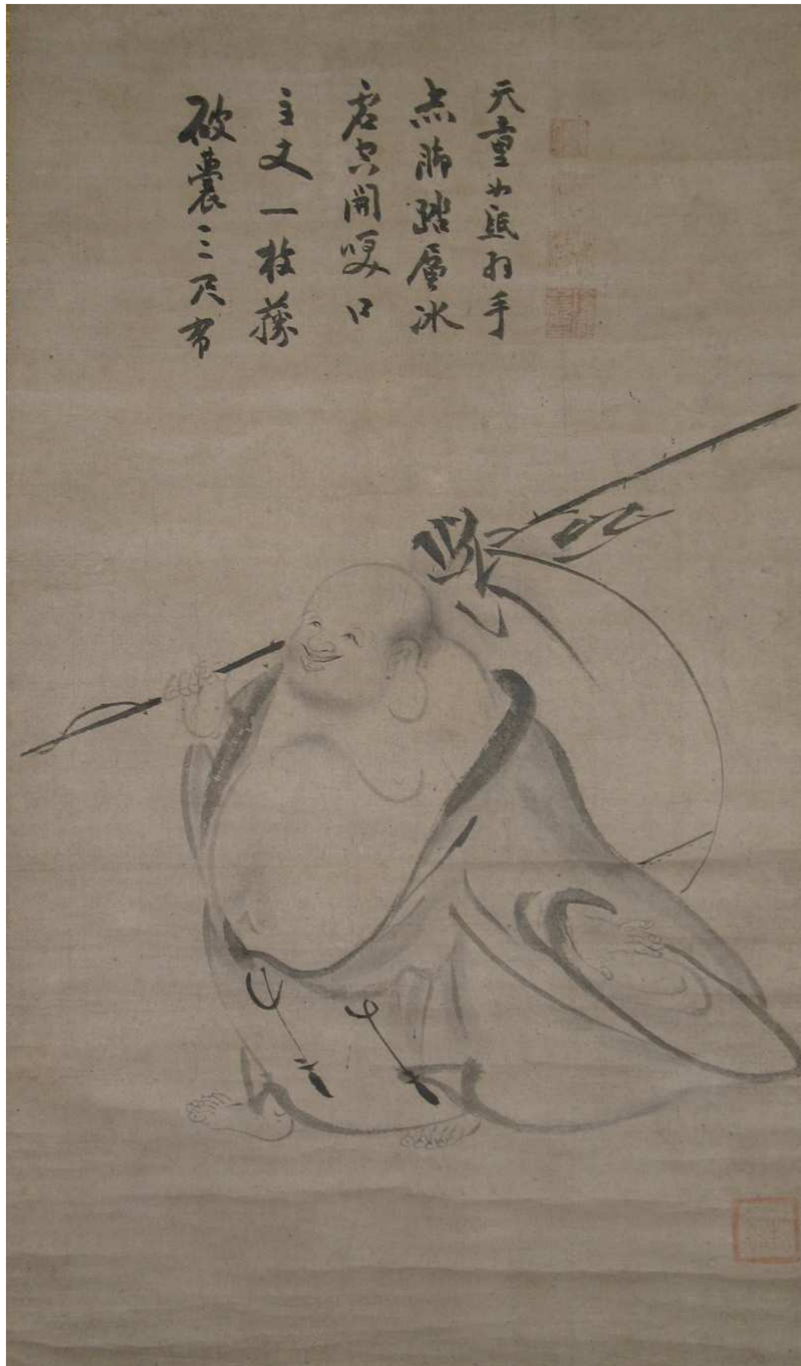


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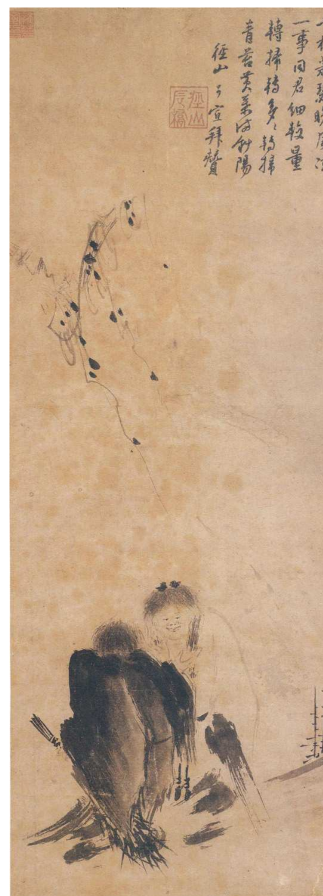


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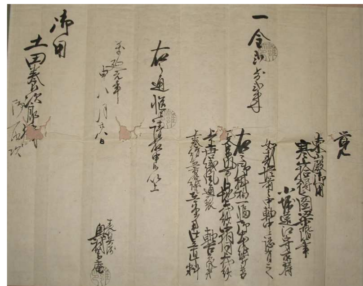
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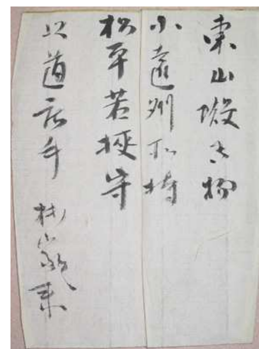


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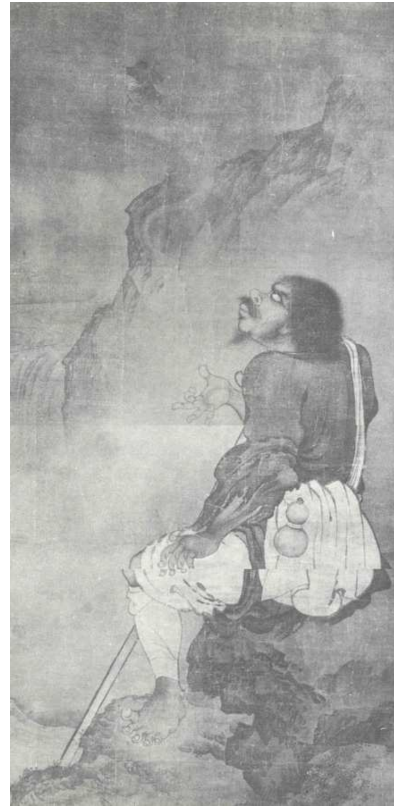


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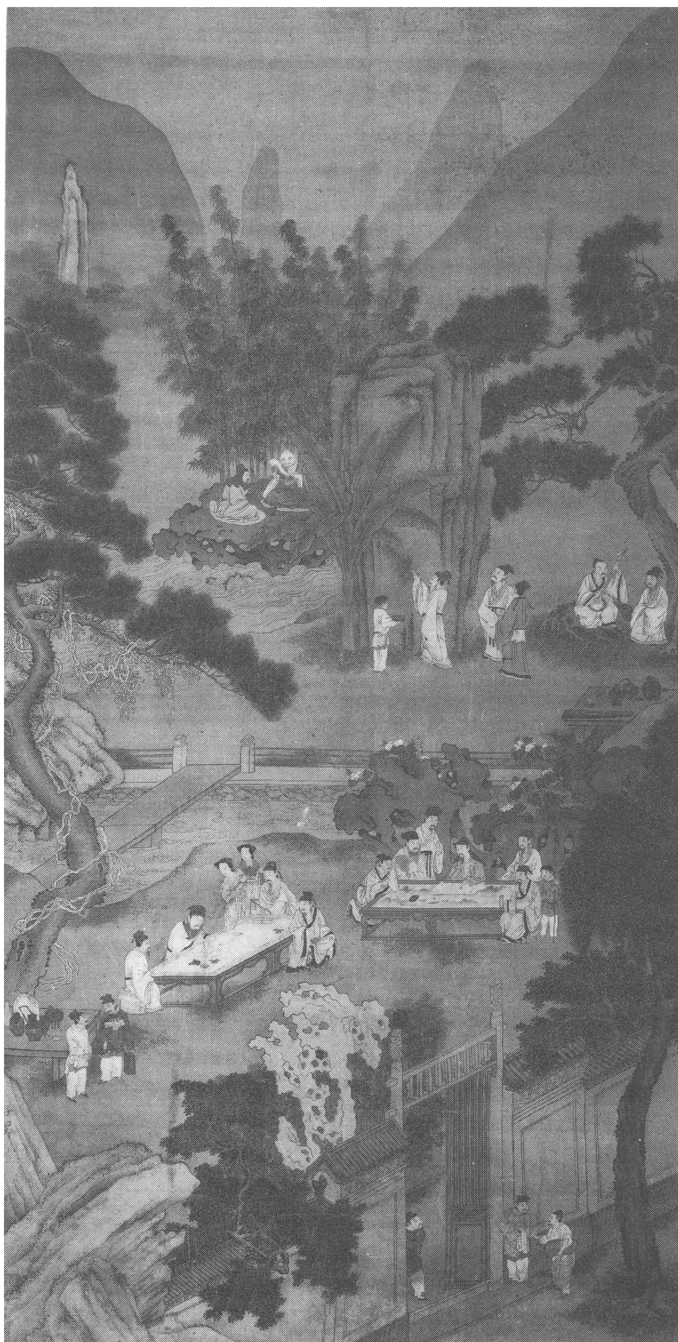


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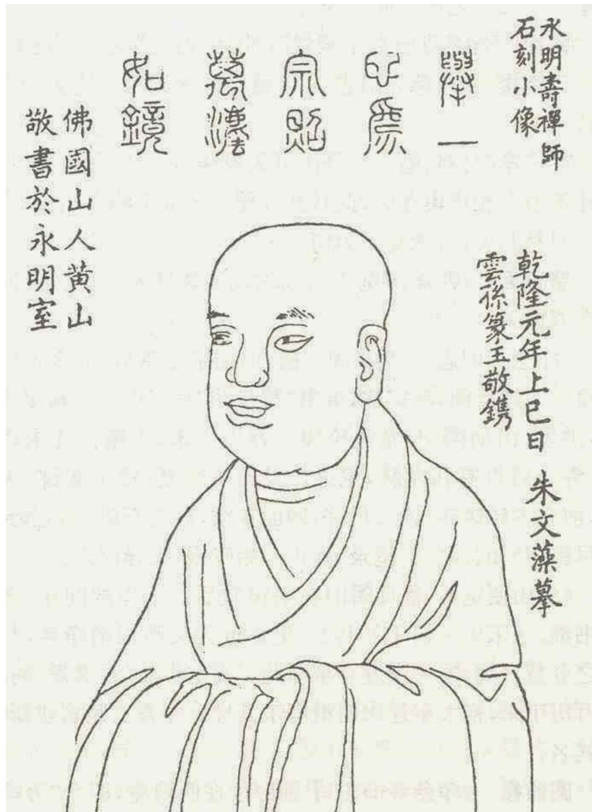



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# SAMENVATTING

In de Chinese geschiedenis zijn weinig figuren zo intrigerend als de Chan excentrieken. Deze legendarische, zonderlinge monniken, waaronder de vrienden Hanshan en Shide, hun leermeester Fenggan, en Budai, zouden hebben geleefd in de bergen en steden van zuidoost China, tussen de zevende en tiende eeuw. Daar gingen ze gekleed in vodden en spraken en handelden ze op hoogst ongebruikelijke manieren. De kwaliteiten die de excentrieken vertegenwoordigden werden gewaardeerd door verschillende sociale en religieuze groeperingen, in het bijzonder door het Chan Boeddhisme (ook wel Zen Boeddhisme, naar het Japans). In de Song en Yuan dynastieën (960-1368) worden de monniken veelvuldig genoemd in Chan teksten, en worden zij een populair en terugkerend thema in de kunst.

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt het thema van de Chan excentrieken in de kunst en cultuur van de Song en de Yuan. Het concentreert zich op de rol van de excentrieken en hun afbeeldingen voor het Chan Boeddhisme, maar besteedt ook aandacht aan de interpretatie van dit onderwerp in andere tradities, en in kunstvormen die in de moderne wetenschap niet met Chan worden geassocieerd. Het onderzoek toont aan hoe deze interpretaties vraagtekens plaatsen bij fundamentele ideeën binnen de vakgebieden Sinologie, Kunstgeschiedenis en Chan Studies, zoals bij ideeën over "religieuze traditie", "portretkunst" en "Chan kunst".

Het eerste hoofdstuk biedt een historisch overzicht van de Chan traditie in de Song dynastie, en gaat in op het debat rond het religieuze karakter van Chan in de Song. Daarnaast introduceert dit hoofdstuk de excentrieken, op basis van hun biografieën in de Boeddhistische canon. Een vergelijking van de excentrieken met andere groepen kluizenaars in traditioneel China toont dat het beschouwen van de monniken als symbolen van "religieuze cultuur", in de definitie van Catherine Bell, het meest recht doet aan de bijdrage die zij leveren aan Chan.

Hoofdstuk twee toont aan dat portretten van Chan excentrieken een unieke categorie vormen binnen de visuele cultuur van het vroegmoderne China. Het definieert het corpus van de portretten op basis van intrinsieke kenmerken, waaronder het gebruik van ruimte en de beweeglijkheid van de afgebeelde figuren, die duidelijk verschillen van de kenmerken van andere kunst uit dezelfde periode. Het hoofdstuk onderscheidt subgroepen binnen het corpus, en gaat in op het visuele effect van deze subgroepen. Hoofdstuk twee onderzoekt ook ideeën over portretkunst in zowel

Westerse als Chinese kunstgeschiedenissen. Het beargumenteert dat het gebruik van de term *portret* geëigend is voor afbeeldingen van de excentrieken.

Hoofdstuk drie onderzoekt de produktie van portretten van excentrieken. Schilders van die portretten staan bekend onder de algemene noemer "Chan schilders". In feite hadden zij uiteenlopende achtergronden, en het hoofdstuk bespreekt het effect hiervan op de wijze waarop het thema van de excentrieken vorm krijgt. Ook behandelt het hoofdstuk inscripties van Chan abten op de portretten. Deze inscripties, vaak geschreven in de vorm van een vraag gericht aan de kijker, zijn uniek aan portretten van de excentrieken, en vormen zo een van de verbanden tussen de concepten "Chan" en "kunst".

In de Song en Yuan dynastieën werden de excentrieken niet alleen geschilderd op papier en zijde, maar ook afgebeeld in andere media. Hoofdstuk vier onderzoekt afbeeldingen van de monniken in de beeldhouwkunst en op stèles, media die in het algemeen niet in combinatie met de schilderkunst worden bestudeerd, en niet met "Chan kunst" worden geassocieerd. Dit materiaal maakt echter nieuwe interpretaties van hetzelfde artistieke thema zichtbaar, met implicaties voor de studie van religie, kunst en samenleving. Hoofdstuk vier behandelt ook verwijzingen naar de monniken in gedichten, toneelstukken en Daoïstische literatuur en kunst. Dit laat zien dat de excentrieken onderdeel waren van een wijdverbreide populaire en religieuze cultuur waarin zij niet alleen Chan persoonlijkheden waren, maar ook Bodhisattvas, dichters, onsterfelijken, alchemisten en heiligen konden zijn.

Het vijfde en laatste hoofdstuk richt zich opnieuw op de kwestie van het verband tussen Chan en kunst, nu gebaseerd op onderzoek naar het gebruik van objecten in Chan kloosters. Handleidingen van Song en Yuan kloosters bewijzen dat die objecten zeer verschillende visualiteiten genereerden, met de bijbehorende praktijken van kijken, vereren en verzamelen. Afbeeldingen van de Chan excentrieken speelden daarbij een centrale rol, als onderdeel van het dagelijks leven in Chan kloosters, en als onderdeel van de kunst en architectuur van beroemde Chan tempels. Hoofdstuk vijf behandelt ook privé-verzamelingen van portretten van excentrieken in China en Japan, en religieuze verzamelingen in Japan. Het toont aan hoe rituelen van het verzamelen en bekijken van de portretten in China en Japan interpretaties van dit artistieke thema tot op heden blijven beïnvloeden.

Dit onderzoek biedt nieuwe inzichten op het gebied van de Chinese religie en kunstgeschiedenis, maar levert bovenal het bewijs voor de dynamiek en de

verscheidenheid van de visuele cultuur van de Chan traditie in de Song en de Yuan. Het nodigt daarmee uit tot vervolg-onderzoek langs verschillende lijnen: bij voorbeeld naar de Chan tempel als centrum voor het verzamelen en bewaren van cultureel erfgoed, en naar de bijdrage van de Chan traditie in bredere zin aan de religie en kunst van China.

## Curriculum Vitae

Paramita Paul was born in Amsterdam on November 24, 1979. She completed her secondary education at the Vossius Gymnasium, Amsterdam, in 1997 and enrolled at the Department of Chinese Studies, Leiden University, in the same year. During her studies at Leiden University, a full-scholarship program at Beijing Language and Culture University, and a traineeship at Sotheby's Amsterdam, she specialized in Chinese art history and did additional coursework in Japanese and Korean languages and art. She received her MA *cum laude* from Leiden University's Department of Chinese Studies in 2003.

In 2004, she completed a one month's study trip to the Foguangshan Chan monastery near Gaoxiong, Taiwan, on a full scholarship from the Foguangshan monastery. Between 2004 and 2009 she conducted PhD research at the Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), on a grant from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). At Leiden University she taught Mandarin, and she designed and taught a course in Chinese art history. She is currently employed as a language instructor at the university's Department of Chinese Studies.